

A Study of EF SET Test and Its Correlation with Academic Performance

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Abstract

This study aims to comprehend the EF SET, a free online Standard English proficiency test, and to determine how it relates to high school students' academic performance, particularly in relation to their English subject grades, by studying the performances of 35 students at a high school using statistical tools to analyse them. The analysis proves that EF SET is correlated with the students' academic performance. It is developed in alignment with IELTS in addition to TOEFL. Finally, suggestions are given to the schools and colleges to integrate this free tool for various purposes, like learning and assessment of English and for using it as an optional document to prove the student's English score, where a document from a professional assessment agency is not mandatory.

Keywords: Academic Performance; EF SET; English Proficiency; IELTS; TOEFL

INTRODUCTION

The ability to communicate in English is vital for anyone expecting to thrive in the 21st century since it is the lingua franca for trade, education, and employment in modern multilingual society (King 2018). Thus, English is a crucial language in academic settings worldwide, serving as the primary medium for instruction, research, and communication. As globalisation continues to shape education, English proficiency is essential for students, educators, and researchers to access vast knowledge, collaborate on international projects, and publish their work. English has become a global lingua franca, overcoming linguistic differences in trade, employment, and education. Due to its broad use, people from various linguistic origins can participate in international economic transactions, collaborate on academic projects across borders, and investigate employment prospects in multinational corporations. Mastering English is not just an advantage but a necessity for anyone aspiring to excel in professional or academic spheres in the 21st century.

Many students opt to study in the UK, the USA, or other foreign countries to learn better English and for better academic, professional, or job prospects. Students wishing to attend a university in the UK, where English isn't their primary

language, must complete an English language assessment to validate their proficiency (*What level of English do I need to get into a UK University?*, 2024). The level must be of a sufficiently high standard. For an undergraduate degree course, the requirement is the "Common European Framework of Reference" (CEFR) level B2.

English-medium schools, even in non-English countries, are believed by governments to enhance students' English proficiency, leading to a more fluent workforce. English Medium Instruction (EMI) programs provide students with both subject knowledge and English language skills. (*How effective is English as a medium of instruction (EMI)?*, n.d.)

English-level test scores significantly influence students' academic performance in English-medium courses. Proficiency in English is crucial for understanding lectures, engaging with course materials, and expressing ideas effectively. Higher proficiency levels correlate with improved reading comprehension, writing skills, and oral communication, leading to academic success. Students with stronger English skills often experience enhanced confidence, participation, and overall academic achievement. Non-native speakers must pass an English Level Test,

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including IELTS, TOEFL, Pearson PTE, and C1 Advanced.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Numerous studies have been carried out to determine the relationship between academic performance in a variety of subjects or disciplines and English test scores. English language proficiency, as well as accounting students' academic achievement in transnational education programs, are statistically correlated, according to a study by Wang et al. (2023). The findings show a moderately positive correlation between advanced financial accounting scores as well as accounting principles scores. This shows that the advanced financial accounting scores rise in accordance with the English seminar scores.

According to a different study by Light et al. (1987), which examined the records of 376 international graduate students at the State University of New York at Albany, the TOEFL score wasn't a reliable predictor of academic performance as determined by grade point average (GPA).

A few studies on EF SET have also been carried out. A study by Takeno and Moritoshi (2018) examined Japanese EFL learners' English proficiency levels. The objective of the investigation was to refute the media's portrayal of Japanese people's poor English proficiency. At Hiroshima Bunkyo University, Sugg (2021) examined the EF SET English Assessment. A five-year trial of Hiroshima Bunkyo University's computer-adaptive English First Standard English Test (EF SET) has been addressed in the author's work. The association between EF SET scores and the streaming of General English classes, according to the author, can be utilised to monitor and possibly validate the in-house Bunkyo English Tests (BETs).

Thus, there exist contradictory conclusions in various research studies. Few studies have been done on the correlation of EF SET scores with the academic performance of secondary school students. The present study shall attempt to review the matter. The hypothesis that "the students with higher English level scores perform better in school examinations" might be investigated as it will determine the relationship between students' academic performance as well as their English proficiency level.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The following are the objectives of the study:

- To understand the EF SET test and its suitability as a standard test to assess the English proficiency level of students
- To find the English proficiency level of some high school students using the EF SET standard test
- To find the correlation between EF SET test scores and the academic performance of school students
- To verify if the students with higher English level scores perform better in English subjects.
- To verify if the students with higher English level scores perform better in school examinations.
- To verify if the EF SET score can be used to assess the English subject performance of the students
- To verify if the EF SET score can be used to assess the overall performance of the students

THE EF SET AS AN OPTION

According to an update given on a website (*English language proficiency test fees updated*, n.d.), the registration fee for IELTS is Rs 17000, for TOEFL, it is Rs 16900, Rs 17000 for Pearson PTE and USD 59 for Duolingo English Test. Qualifying for one of these or a similar test is mandatory for aspirants going abroad. But other students and early career candidates also wish to take these tests to assess their English proficiency and for better career prospects abroad and within the country. In such a scenario, the importance and role of the EF SET test are worth acknowledging. The EF SET and EF SET PLUS are free online assessments that assess reading and listening skills in the English language (Luecht, 2015). They have a consistent platform-to-platform interface and are professionally developed and managed. The tests offer a rapid and accurate evaluation of language proficiency since they are adaptively designed to each examinee's level of proficiency.

Luecht (2015), in the same study, has also proved that EF SET has a positive correlation with IELTS scores. In another study, Luecht (2015) proved that EF SET has a positive correlation with TOEFL scores. Thus, EF SET is quite efficient and can be a good option for the English Level Test. Some of the pros and cons of EF SET are given below:

Pros of EF SET:

- It is a free test available online, which can be taken at any time.

- It tests the candidate's Reading and Listening Skills, and it takes less than 50 minutes. Additionally, candidates can choose to take their recently updated test, which covers all four skills – speaking, listening, reading, and writing – In roughly 90 minutes.
- Scores and certificates are issued instantly. The score is comparable to CEFR.
- The test is a standard test and is in resonance with IELTS and TOEFL.

Cons of EF SET:

- It is a non-proctored test conducted from home without any vigilance through a live camera. And so, it is not being accepted for admission to universities.

METHODOLOGY

This study was done on 35 students at a private school in southwest Rajasthan. The population size from the school record is found to be 114. It includes all the students from classes 9 to 12. So, the sample size was 30.70 % of the population. The students of classes 9 to 12 were asked to take the EF SET test from their homes, and it was not mandatory. So, some of them participated voluntarily. 70 entries were registered for this test. Some of the entries were repeated because some students had attempted multiple times. Moreover, a few of the tests were invalid. These tests are given a “no score” by the software. Doubtful entries, “no score,” and repeated entries were eliminated from the data. Finally, 35 entries were left for data analysis.

The EF SET test can be taken using a computer or a smartphone with headphones. Maximum time allowed is 25 minutes for the Reading session and 25 minutes for the Listening session. Each question is of 1 mark, and there is no negative marking. The score ranges from 1 to 100 and is also assigned the levels A1 (Elementary) to C2 (Proficient) as per the CEFR scale. Only the scores 1 to 100 were taken into consideration for this study, not the levels.

Approximately one and a half months after taking the EF SET, the students also sat for their routine Half Yearly Examination in the school. The marks were collected from the school office. Students of classes 9 and 10 have the same five school subjects. From their progress report, marks of English subjects (in percentage) and marks of all the subjects together (in percentage) were tabulated. The students of classes 11 and 12 have

different combinations of elective subjects. Some have English literature, Political Science, and Geography, while others have Chemistry, Physics, Biology, or Mathematics. Compulsory English and Compulsory Hindi are the two subjects that are common to all students. Marks of Compulsory English (in percentage) and marks of all the subjects together (in percentage) were considered for the study. Practical marks in Chemistry, Physics, Biology, and Geography were not considered for the study.

The EF Set scores were obtained through the online EF SET test the students attempted from their homes. This test is available on their website. Marks of the English subject and the overall total marks were obtained from the progress report card of the students from the school office. Microsoft Excel sheets were used for data analysis.

HYPOTHESIS

To prove that the students with higher English level scores perform better in the English subject. The following hypotheses are formulated.

1H0 There is no or negative correlation between the EF SET score and the English subject score of the students.

1Ha There is a positive correlation between the EF SET score and the English subject score of the students.

If the null hypothesis is rejected, our statement shall be proved to be correct.

To prove that the students with higher English level scores perform better in school examinations.

2H0 There is no or negative correlation between the EF SET score and the overall score of the students.

2Ha There is a positive correlation between the EF SET score and the overall score of the students.

If the null hypothesis is rejected, our statement shall be proved to be correct.

To prove that the EF SET score can be used to assess the English subject performance of the students.

3H0 There is no significant difference between the means of EF SET and the English score of the students.

3Ha There is a significant difference between the means of EF SET and the English score of the students.

If the null hypothesis is accepted, our statement

shall be proved to be correct.

To prove that the EF SET score can be used to assess the overall performance of the students.

4H0 There is no significant difference between the means of EF SET and the overall per cent of the students.

4Ha There is a significant difference between the means of EF SET and the overall percentage of the students.

If the null hypothesis is accepted, our statement shall be proved to be correct.

DATA ANALYSIS

Data from 35 students were analysed in this study. From class 9, of four boys and 1 girl; from class 10, of one boy and three girls; from class 11, of 7 boys and 5 girls; and from class 12, 5 boys and 9 girls. Thus, there is a total of 5 students from class 9, 4 from class 10, 12 from class 11, and 14 from class 12, which makes the total of 35 students. These data are presented in Table 1 given below:

Table 1: Profile of the Samples

Class	Boys	Girls	Total
9	4	1	5
10	1	3	4
11	7	5	12
12	5	9	14
Total	17	18	35

A table was made in Microsoft Excel worksheet with EF SET scores and marks of the Half Yearly examination of the students. Thereafter, using the Excel worksheets, data analysis was done.

Table 2: t-Test: Paired Two Sample for Means: EF SET vs. English

	EF SET	Eng Percent
Mean	38.22857143	72.04081633
Variance	143.1226891	268.1015263
Observations	35	35
Pearson Correlation	0.582693649	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
Df	34	
t Stat	-14.78947031	
P(T<=t) two-tail	2.25189E-16	
t Critical two-tail	2.032244498	

According to Table 2 above, there is a relatively positive correlation between students' EF SET scores and their English subject scores, with the Pearson correlation coefficient for the data of EF

SET Score vs. English per cent being 0.58. Thus, the null hypothesis 1H0 (There is no or negative correlation between EF SET score and English subject score of students) is rejected.

Moreover, the P value for the two-end tail is far less than 0.05. Thus, the hypothesis 3H0 (There is no significant difference between the means of EF SET and English scores of students) is rejected.

Table 3: t-Test: Paired Two Sample for Means EF SET vs. Overall Percent

	EF SET	Overall Percent
Mean	38.22857143	66.15015947
Variance	143.1226891	244.5891006
Observations	35	35
Pearson Correlation	0.5523764	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
Df	34	
t Stat	-12.27776379	
P(T<=t) two-tail	4.76384E-14	
t Critical two-tail	2.032244498	

Similarly, from the above-given Table 3, we find that the Pearson Correlation coefficient for data of EF SET Score vs. English Per cent is 0.55, which means that there is a moderately positive correlation between scores of EF SET and the overall per cent of students. Thus, the null hypothesis 2H0 (There is no or negative correlation between EF SET score and English subject score of students) is rejected.

Furthermore, the P value for the two-end tail in this case is also far less than 0.05. Thus, the hypothesis 4H0 (There is no significant difference between the means of EF SET and the overall per cent of students) is rejected.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

From the data analysis, it is proven that EF SET has a moderately positive correlation between English scores and the overall percentage of students. However, their means are quite different and suggest that EF SET and the school examinations are quite different types of tests. Thus, the EF SET

score cannot take the place of the traditional examinations in the school.

However, the EF SET Score is suitable for assessing the English proficiency of the students. Its score is comparable to IELTS and TOEFL. Moreover, it is aligned with the CEFR scale. It has a moderately positive correlation with the performance of students in English subjects as well as the overall result of the school examination. It is available free of cost to students, schools, colleges, and businesses as a tool to assess the English level of the present as well as prospective students or employees.

SUGGESTIONS

EF SET test is useful in several ways. Some of them are mentioned below, along with the suggestions.

- ELTAI and other organisations should use EF SET as a tool for assessing the English proficiency of students or employees. ELTAI had earlier tried to start an English Level Test, which was discontinued after a pilot project. They can now use the EF SET test under proctored test mode, and certificates may be issued to the students or clients.
- Schools and colleges should make maximum use of this free tool to promote English learning among their students and staff.
- Schools and colleges may accept EF SET scores as proof of the English level of prospective students or employees. They may consider conducting the EF SET under proctored test mode.
- Students may practice EF SET for their preparation for professional tests like IELTS, TOEFL, etc.
- Every state department of education should develop such a Language Level Test to test English and other Indian languages for the benefit of the education community.

Declaration: The author is not affiliated with the organisation offering the EF SET test. He has no vested interest in promoting this test.

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