

The Predictive Validity of Ethiopian Higher Educational Entrance Certificate Examination and Its Relationships with Proficiency and Other Examinations

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Abstract

The Ethiopian Higher Educational Entrance Certificate Examination (EHEECE) is a test, which serves to select candidates to higher learning. Nevertheless, there is no available research on whether the EHEECE English achievement scores directly relates with and predicts learners' language proficiency and academic success. To examine the above issues, proficiency examinations, extracted from various texts, were conducted to first year Social Science students at Adama University. The findings reveal that there is a positive but low relationship between EHEECE and proficiency examination. Similarly, the EHEECE predicts learners academic success but in an unsatisfactory manner. On the other hand, the proficiency examination displays high relationship with learners' academic achievement. Additionally, the EHEECE affects female students negatively. Hence, the EHEECE English examination needs revision. The examination should appraise learners' proficiency. It also needs to include subjective questions to carry out its selection effectively

Background of the Study

Towards the end of the 1960s, there was a growing dissatisfaction in British, concerning most approaches of language teaching in general and situational language teaching in particular. The approaches used to produce structurally competent students who were inept in their communicative abilities (Macro 1977; Brown 1993). Over the last five decades, however, the trend has changed to communicative language teaching which aims to develop

communicative competence, presenting the major and subsidiary skills in an integrated manner in order to involve learners in meaningful interaction (Ibid). Accordingly, the purposes of Ethiopian English courses in Grades 11 and 12 are “. . . to consolidate the work done so far in developing the students’ English language skills, and to develop the study skills which the students need in order to work efficiently both at school and at tertiary level” (Ministry of Education 1997:5).

In spite of the above objectives, the method of testing English in the EHEECE examination is still limited to multiple-choice format alone. Obviously, it is hardly possible to measure examinees’ communicative abilities and proficiency using multiple-choice format. Additionally, the format brings about a rift between language teaching and testing which, in turn, could retard the teaching learning process, directing students to be only structurally competent.

It may be due to the above factors that learners become inept in their language performance at tertiary level. In fact, when I was teaching freshman English courses, sophomore English, Business English etc, students who had joined Adama University, passing the ESLCE, were not able to succeed in the examinations of the above courses in most cases. Thus, the driving forces for investigating the relationship between learners EHEECE and proficiency scores are my own personal experience, the researches done on ESLSCE and proficiency levels (Dejene 1990□; Teshome 1995).

Statement of the Problem

Canale (1983) spells out that communicative competence entails four components: linguistic, sociolinguistic, discourse and strategic competencies. Communicative competence is the order of the day. Accordingly, the syllabus of English, in Ethiopia, is designed in line with the features of communicative language teaching in such a way that the skills are presented in an integrated manner, using various techniques such as project work, role-play, pair and group work in order to promote meaningful interaction. This is assumed to empower learners to carry out their academic tasks and day-to-day activities optimally (Atkins et al 1996).

In spite of the progressive strides in communicative language teaching, it is noticeable that students are tested in the EHEECE inappropriately since the content and form of communicative language teaching are not manifested in the content and form of the examination. This is true, too, to high school English examinations (Kifle 1995). In other words, the tests fail to “ape the teaching” (Davies 1988:5). Nevertheless, Heaton (1982:5) spells out that “both testing and teaching are so closely interrelated that it is virtually impossible to work in either field without being constantly concerned with the other”.

The EHEECE employs multiple-choice format. Similarly, most high school English examinations are objective type (Kifle 1995). According to Carroll (1980: 9)

. . . in building up easily devised and objectively scored tests of strings of linguistic items we may miss the essence of measurement of communicative performance. Detaching test items from their

communicative context is to risk finding little about the learners' behavior which is not trivial and merely multiplying the number of trivia is not going to solve the measurement problem.

In real life, people do not communicate in the form of multiple choices. Hence, the multiple choice format tests are not a genuine reflection of the real world communication. And yet, Dejene (1994:19) points out that “. . . the multiple choice format is being used as the sole technique in our school system and in ESLCE examinations, regardless of the likely damages it could inflict upon the entire teaching/learning process.” In essence, if the test is supposed to indicate how well an individual uses a language but does not require the individual to use the language in the examination; needless to say, the validity of the test, in general, and the predictive validity of the test, in particular, is indecisive. In other words, high-test scores in EHEECE may not necessarily mean high proficiency. Similarly, low-test scores in EHEECE may not necessarily mean low proficiency. These assumptions work to the preparatory English average scores, too.

Thus, the present researcher aims at investigating the association and predictive powers of learners EHEECE scores and preparatory English average scores with their proficiency level.

To meet the above aims, the following research questions are formulated:

1. Does high/low score in EHEECE English examinations directly relate to learners high/low English proficiency?

2. Does high/low score in the preparatory English average directly relate to learners high/low English proficiency?
3. Can the EHEECE and preparatory English scores predict learners' academic performance and language proficiency?
4. Is there a gender difference in the performance of students in EHEECE?

Significance of the Study

The EHEECE is a test, administered at the national level by the National Organization for Examinations (NOE) with the aim of selecting candidates to higher learning institutions. The Ethiopian higher learning institutions admit students based on the results of preparatory transcripts and EHEECE scores. As a newly administered test, EHEECE and preparatory English average scores need to be checked for their validity in measuring learners' proficiency and expected performance in higher learning institutions. In addition, the testing program set by the NOE need to be checked for its successfulness in getting the necessary information for admission decision.

The result of this study, therefore, is hoped to provide paramount help for EHEECE English examination developers, pinpointing possible ways of improving the examination in line with the measurement of communicative abilities. The result is also expected to be valuable for preparatory English teachers in order to redefine their classroom practices and tests in accordance with communicative competence. By doing so, the study may bridge the rift between communicative language teaching and the EHEECE English examination.

Objective of the Study

The central theme of this study is to investigate the degree of relationships and predictive powers between the EHEECE English examination and learners' proficiency level. The specific objectives of the study are to:

- 1 assess students' proficiency of reading, grammar, vocabulary and writing in a communicative manner so as to relate to the overall gains or losses of the students EHEECE English scores.
- 2 relate students' preparatory English average scores with their proficiency examination scores.
- 3 check the predictive power of EHEECE and preparatory English average scores.
- 4 examine gender performance difference.

Scope of the Study

The study is delimited to Adama University first year Social Science students and to four variables: EHEECE English examination, preparatory English average scores, proficiency examination and 1st semester University GPA.

Limitation of the Study

It would have been interesting to include other colleges and universities as the subject of study. Due to shortage of time and finance, however, the study was limited to Adama University.

Review of the Related Literature

Theoretical Background of Language Proficiency

Language proficiency tests, like any other forms of language tests, have their own language theories. Initially, Oller's Unitary Competence Hypothesis (UCH) exerted a dominant influence. Language proficiency, according to Oller (1979), is highly linked with intelligence. As Teshome Demisse quotes Skehan (1988:212) who cites Oller (1979), regarding UCH, Oller contends that:

there is one underlying competence for language behavior, based on the learner's pragmatic expectancy grammar; one can only comprehend (and produce) language by means of process of analyses by syntheses, i.e., we comprehend by predicting the message we are encountering, drawing upon our knowledge of the world and, through the pragmatic expectancy grammar, the redundancy built into language.

Due to the development of communicative approach, Oller's view was refuted and, in turn, supplanted by multi componential view. Multi-dimensional view, by and large, grounds on two frameworks. The first was the view of Canale and Swain (1980), which entails originally three competencies: grammatical, socio-linguistic and strategic. Redressing the framework by adding discourse competence, Canale (1983) forwards four competencies. Then, the second framework was designed by Bachman (1990). According to Skehan (1988) cited in Teshome (1995:44) "Bachman's model includes three trait factors, i.e. language and strategic competencies as well as skills and method factors."

Bachman (1990) apprehended language ability in terms of communicative language ability. Similarly, according to Vollmer (1983), language ability relates to a performance matrix. Vollmer argues that:

From the point of view of classical test theory it was argued that the degree of mastery in a foreign language could be inferred from the multitude of measured language performances (at least four). Thus, it would be possible to form some sort of overall picture of a person's language ability and of his ability to act in a more or less predictable manner even in the future situations requiring language use (Vollmer (1983) cited in Teshome (1995:40)).

Performance assessment engages learners actively in the task being assessed. It is dynamic. It requires learners to demonstrate their skill and knowledge (Airsian 2000; Brualdi 1998, and Perman 2002). Its purpose is to find out what each student is able to do with knowledge in context (Wiggins 1989). The stumbling block in assessing proficiency using performance tasks in the EHEECE is the test format. As scholars point out, time and again, the multiple-choice tests fail to assess higher order skills. Due to their failure, there has been a growing interest in using performance assessment among scholars (O'Neil 1992 and Wiggins 1989). The instrument of performance assessment i.e., a constructed response format has multifarious merits: it instructs examinees to develop a response, create a product or demonstrate their skills (Frisby 2001; Fever and Fulton 1993).

Communication and the Multiple Choice Formats

According to Savignon (1983:8-9) communication is understood as “dynamic rather than --- static ---. It depends on the negotiation of meaning between two or more persons. It is context specific. Communication takes place in an infinite variety of situations, and success in a particular role depends on one’s understanding of the context and on prior experience of a similar kind.” Similarly, Richards and Schmidt (1983:4) define communication as “the exchange and negotiation of information between at least two individuals through the use of verbal and non-verbal symbols, oral and written visual modes and production and comprehension processes.” Communication language ability should, therefore, manifest the elements of communication, entailing both knowledge and use (Bachman 1990). Learners should negotiate, interact and exchange information for “language is culture in motion” (Savignon 1983:187).

The purpose of tests is, then, to assess the ability of learners to use the language in life like situations. Regarding the nature of communicative testing, Weir (1990:6) suggests tests to be “more integrative and less discrete; more direct and less indirect more criteria referenced and less norm referenced.” The implementations of such tests provide appropriate information for decisions to make over examinees’ communicative language ability. The success of communicative ability assessment, among other factors, depends on the effective selection and use of appropriate format. The national examination uses multiple-choice format alone. As a result, test takers simply choose answers in a non – participatory manner without negotiating over meaning. This approach creates a gap between the EHEECE

and communicative testing. The gap occurs namely because learners are not able to display their communicative language ability, and the format is not sensitive to the language theory of communication.

The Cambridge Education Consultants (1986:38), after analyzing the ESLCE items, point out the side effects of the format as follows:

all employ questions of multiple choice type only. This restriction sets severe limitations to the range of cognitive skills that can be tested, and is thus itself a constraint on quality. It is not possible for example, to test the capacity of pupils to produce original work of any kind: a reasoned argument, a defense of a point of view, and a piece of creative writing. Nor it is possible to test problem solving skills in open ended situations; that is situations in which the pupil must work out his or her own solution, rather than simply choose between alternatives offered by examiners. Nearly all real life problem solutions are of course, open ended.

It seems apparent that multiple-choice tests fail to incorporate the full range of communication, which they are assumed to measure. Failing to give emphasis to the intended outcomes of language learning such as speaking, listening and writing skills, the tests are affecting learners' proficiency and achievement adversely (Hughes 1989 and Weir 1983).

Ferderiksen (1984:193) argues that "any test is likely to influence the behavior of students and teachers provided they know about it in advance." This is what is happening in Ethiopia. Teachers want their students to succeed in their EHEECE performance and students want to score good grades. Accordingly, test items have become objective type. According to Kifle Kebede (1995: 19) "in Ethiopian high schools the way items are tested

does not match with how they are taught.” Ferderikesn (1984:201) proposes the need “to develop instruments that will better reflect the whole domain of educational goals and to find ways to use them in improving educational process.” In other words, there is a need to link assessment to language theories, and it is high time to introduce suitable approaches to measure learners’ communicative ability.

The Effect of Multiple Choice Assessment on Instruction and Gender

To ensure test fairness, test items need to be gender free. Nevertheless, studies point out that test formats, one way or another, affect gender. In other words, males and females react differently in different test format. Scholars conclude that males perform better than females on multiple-choice format (Hellekant 1994; Murphy 1980; Wood 1978). Hellekant (1994:351), for instance, points out that:

When Swedish boys and girls did an English test where the tasks were similar but when one part was of the m/c and one of the free response formats, the girls invariably did a little better than the boys on the free response part, while the boys did considerably better than the girls on the m/c part. It is difficult to find another reason than the testing method.

From the above analysis, it can be argued that examinations that employ merely one type of format can affect either females or males negatively. Thus, test developers should consider the characteristics of examinees since “Different students are bound to react differently to tests. Age, gender, socio-cultural background, learning background may all affect how a test taker react to a particular test” (Brown 1993:279).

Research Design and Construction of the Tests

The Subjects

First year Social Science students of Adama University were the target population for this study. From 1049 Social Science students, 200 learners were selected randomly. The majority of the populations were males (144) with 56 females.

Instruments of Data Collection and their Purposes

Tests were the data gathering instruments. Results of EHEECE and preparatory English average scores and first semester GPA of learners' academic performance (2005) were collected from the Office of the Registrar of the University.

After examining The Complete Proficiency Practice Tests (1990), Focus on Proficiency (1984), The First Certificate Star (1998), the IELTS Practice Tests (1985), First Certificate Proficiency Tests (1990) and Advance with English (1993), the researcher extracted model tests from the above texts. Then, the tests were given to instructors and test experts to get their views regarding the appropriateness of the tests proficiency, the fairness of time allotment, the clarity of instructions and the familiarity of test formats. The purpose of the proficiency tests was to examine the relationship and predicative powers with other tests. Gains or losses on the proficiency tests were related to their EHEECE, high school average and University courses achievements to analyze the similarities or differences of the scores.

Additionally, the effect of the multiple-choice items on gender was inspected.

Methods of Data Analysis and Interpretation

The study employs quantitative methods. Pearson Coefficient correlation analysis, multiple regression co-efficient and T-test scores were used to identify the relationships and predictive power of EHEECE and preparatory English average examinations. Descriptive statistics such as mean, standard deviation and percentages were also employed to analyze the data.

Test Trial

Incorporating instructors comment, the test was piloted on 30 students at Adama University. Using the split-half method, the reliability of the test was calculated and the result showed ($r = .8308$) high stability. Doing statistical analysis, difficult tasks were replaced with moderate ones. Consequently, the final test was tailored to the level of the test takers, giving due attention to the communicativeness of content and tasks.

Scoring Rubrics

The intent of the proficiency test was notified on the cover page of the examination. To avoid carelessness, their respective instructors told examinees strictly that the examination would be counted. They also made clear to test takers the need to finish the examinations within 2 1/2 hours. Furthermore, the weight of items was informed to test takers. Accordingly, test items were marked in line with the construct. More weight was given to content and organization. This is because many scholars propose to give weight to content and organization.

Inter Rater Reliability

The item of the proficiency tests was open ended. Needless to say, the idea of subjectivity seems unavoidable. To maintain the reliability of the tests, results were marked by two scorers. Interestingly, markers reliability exhibited high correlation.

Table 1: Scorer Reliability for Proficiency Tests Correction

Variables	Correlation coefficient N=200
Total Reading	0.812
Total Grammar	0.853
Total Vocabulary	0.889
Total writing	0.768

Analysis of the Results

Descriptive Statistics

When we examine the EHEECE candidates, we find that their average score ($\bar{x} = 45.4350$) is below average. The figure goes down ($\bar{x} = 24.5675$) for their proficiency test scores. Hence, the students turn to be weak in both their EHEECE and proficiency performances. The average difference between the tests may attribute to the item differences and to the nature of the tasks. The EHEECE is multiple choices, which, mainly, opens room for guessing. The proficiency test on the other hand is open-ended which does not give room for guessing. Unlike the EHEECE, the proficiency examination tasks appraise higher order skills, demanding test takers to demonstrate their performances.

With regard to dispersion, the EHEECE relatively shows ($S = 8.6533$) group similarity in terms of achievement, but the proficiency test displays ($S = 12.9705$) group difference in terms of proficiency level. When we relate the results with learners' first Semester University GPA, the proficiency test is closer than the EHEECE examination, which confirms the heterogeneity of the groups under consideration. Since the homogeneity of the groups in EHEECE fails to show consistency with the result of the 1st semester University GPA. Thus, one can safely conclude that the discrimination power of the EHEECE is weaker than the proficiency test.

Table 2: Average Score and Standard Deviation of the Subjects

Variables	Total Weight	Max. Score	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Reading	26	18.5	6.4975	3.7699	200
Grammar	19	12.5	5.7725	3.3328	200
Vocabulary	30	22	6.7200	4.5220	200
Writing	25	19.5	5.4200	4.3498	200
Proficiency test	100	67	24.5675	12.9705	200
EHEECE	100	81	45.4350	8.6533	200
Preparatory English aver.	100	84	60.6125	6.9943	200
First Semester University CGPA	100	100	63.0125	17.2028	200

Bivariate Correlations

Table 3 indicates the bivariate correlations among EHEECE, preparatory English average, proficiency test, and first semester University academic GPA scores.

Relatively, all the variables have positive relationships, showing differences in terms of strength. The relationship between EHEECE and preparatory

English average scores spells out ($r = .136$) slightly positive relationship. The link is almost negligible. Consequently, Adama University enrolls candidates based on unrelated results of the above two tests. Similarly, the value of correlation between EHEECE and the proficiency test shows ($r = .288$) definite but small relationship. Compared to the preceding relationships, the bivariate correlation between preparatory English average and English proficiency scores manifests ($r = .424$) moderate relationships. Thus, the preparatory English average measures learners' proficiency better than the EHEECE does.

On the other hand, the association between the EHEECE and the first semester University GPA ($r = .206$) appears low. Additionally, the link between high school preparatory English average scores and first semester University GPA displays ($r = .331$) low relationship, and yet it is better than the link that the EHEECE has with University 1st semester GPA ($r = .206$). Finally, yet importantly, the correlation between the proficiency test and the first semester academic GPA points out ($r = .592$) moderate relationship. From the foregoing relationships, one can infer that there is an association between language proficiency and academic performance. When we inspect the level of relationships, the EHEECE shows the weakest tie with University 1st semester GPA, which, in turn, implies the failure of the test in incorporating the language elements, which are essential for the success of higher learning academic performances.

Table 3: Bivariate correlations among the first variables in the study

Variables	Proficiency test	EHEECE score	Preparatory English score	University 1 st semester GPA
Proficiency test score	1.00			
EHEECE score	.288 **	100		
Preparatory English average score	.424**	.136*	1.00	
University 1 st semester GPA	.592**	.206*	.331*	1.00
Mean	24.57675	45.4350	60.6125	63.0125
Standard deviation	12.9705	8.6533	6.9943	17.2028

** Correlation significant at .05 (two tailed). N = 200

Bivariate Correlation of the Variables of Proficiency and EHEECE Examinations

Table 4: Bivariate correlation of the variables of proficiency and EHEECE Examinations

Variables	Proficiency Examination scores	EHEECE Score in relation to proficiency scores
Reading skill score	.790**	.158**
Grammar score	.799**	.235**
Vocabulary score	.779**	.192**
Writing score	.739**	.290**

** Correlation Significant at .05 (two tailed). N=200

The components of the proficiency tests (Table 4 below) such as reading ($r=.790$), grammar ($r=.799$), vocabulary ($r=.779$) and writing ($r=.730$) manifest high correlation, compared to the proficiency examination itself. By

contrast, the link between EHEECE and the components of the proficiency examination demonstrate low relationships. For example, reading and EHEECE have ($r = .158$) low relationship. This holds true to vocabulary and EHEECE ($r = .192$). Hence, candidates' EHEECE English score is not a good predictor of their language proficiency.

Bivariate Correlation of the Variables of Proficiency and Preparatory English Average

The components of the proficiency examination and preparatory English average show low positive correlation. For example, the link between writing proficiency and preparatory English average portrays ($r = .284$) the lowest association (see Table 5). Nevertheless, among the variables, grammar proficiency and preparatory English average point out ($r = .414$) moderate relationship. Thus, the preparatory English examinations seem to give stress to grammar than EHEECE examination. Among the variables, the EHEECE indicates ($r = .290$) the closest link to writing, insinuating the focus of the EHEECE on writing, which is not the case practically. The EHEECE simply assesses linguistic competence. Besides, the above association clash with the link preparatory English average has with the proficiency examination. In the proficiency examination, candidates score the least on writing. On the other hand, they perform well at grammar and vocabulary, compared to reading and writing.

Table 5: Bivariate correlation of the variables of proficiency and preparatory English average

Variables	Proficiency examination scores	EHEECE scores in relation to proficiency	Preparatory English average in relation to proficiency
Reading skill score	.790**	.158**	.376**
Grammar score	.799*	.235**	.414*
Vocabulary score	.779*	.192**	.292*
Writing score	.730*	.290**	.284*

** Correlation significant at .05 (two tailed). N = 200

EHEECE and Preparatory English Average Scores as Predictors of First Semester College GPA

To test the effects of students’ EHEECE English result and preparatory English average scores on their 1st semester GPA and language proficiency, each variable is regressed on the EHEECE English result and preparatory English average scores. The results depict that EHEECE (r=0. 164, P ≤ .05) and preparatory English average (r=0. 309, p ≤ 0.05) have significant positive effect on students’ first semester University GPA. This implies that students who score high on both EHEECE and preparatory English average examinations are likely to score high in their University academic performances. The results further disclose that EHEECE and preparatory English score account for about 14% and 11% of the variations in students’ first semester University GPA.

As Table 6 shows, both EHEECE (p= 0.235, p ≤ 0.05) and preparatory English average scores (p= 0.393, p ≤ 0.05) are significant positive

predictors of candidates' language proficiency. In other words, learners who score high on both EHEECE and preparatory English average are likely to score high in the proficiency examination. The results further display that about 23% and 18% variations in their proficiency levels are explained by the variations in their EHEECE and preparatory English average scores.

Table 6: The predictive powers of EHEECE and preparatory English scores on first semester University GPA and proficiency tests

Variables	1 st semester GPA		Language proficiency	
	β	R ²	β	R ²
EHEECE	.164**	.136**	.235**	.234**
Preparatory English average scores	.309**	.110**	.393**	.180**

** P ≤ 0.05

EHEECE Achievement and Gender

Using t-test, the impact of EHEECE on the achievements of males and females is examined. To test the significance of the difference between the English mean score of the two groups, t_{ob} is calculated at alpha level of 0.05 (one-tailed). Accordingly, t-calculated value (6.7121) is greater than t-critical value (1.645) at alpha level 0.05 and $df = 198$. Hence, the difference between mean scores of males and females in their EHEECE achievements is beyond chance error. Male students achieve greater mean value than female students.

Table 7: EHEECE Achievement and Gender

Variable	Sex	Mean	St. Deviation	t_{ob}	t_c	df
EHEECE	Male	42.839	9.781	6.712	1.65	198
	Female	46.444	7.9841			

t_{ob} =obtained value t_c = t-critical df = degree of freedom

Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusions

This study has identified the relationships and predictive powers of the four types of examination with the view of proposing effective ways of language assessment which can involve both lower and higher order skills in order to identify the proficiency level of learners properly. By doing so, the researcher assumes that the EHEECE English examinations can predict the performance of learners effectively. The findings of the study make clear that most students are low achievers in both the EHEECE (\bar{X} =45.4350) and the proficiency examinations (\bar{X} =24.5675). The average difference between the tests may be attributed to the item difference and to the nature of the tasks. The EHEECE is multiple-choice type, where as the proficiency examination is open-ended. The tasks of EHEECE measure lower order skills. By contrast, the proficiency examinations mainly assess higher order skills.

Besides, the discrimination power of preparatory English average (S=6.9943) and EHEECE (S=.6533) appears to be low in comparison to the proficiency examinations (S=12.9705) and University 1st semester GPA (S=17.2028). The preparatory English average and the EHEECE results become ineffective in identifying language performance differences of test takers. Regarding the relationships of the variables under considerations, they show positive relationships, having differences in terms of strength. In most cases, the relationships are weak. The preparatory English average portrays (r = .424) a closer tie to the proficiency test than the EHEECE (r = .288). This pinpoints two lessons: preparatory English average examinations

involve skills and tasks. And for the success of learners in higher learning, the EHEECE should assess examinees communicative abilities. Among the variables, proficiency test score shows ($r = .592$) moderate relationship with University first semester GPA which informs the link between language proficiency and academic success.

The EHEECE and preparatory English average predict learners University academic performance. In other words, candidates who score high on both EHEECE and preparatory English average examinations are likely to score high in their academic performances. The EHEECE and preparatory English score of the test takers is low. Consequently, the predictive powers of the two tests are unsatisfactory. They leave 86% and 89% of the variations unexplained respectively. Similarly, EHEECE and preparatory English average predict learners' language proficiency. In other words, learners who score high on both the EHEECE and preparatory English average are likely to score high in the proficiency examination. Among the considered subjects, learners are low achievers in the EHEECE. Hence, the examinations have limited predictive powers. Finally, the result reveals that males perform better than females in the EHEECE.

Recommendations

The following possible solutions are forwarded based on the review of the related literature and the experiences the present researcher has. The recommendations are assumed to be relevant and workable for improving the methods of language assessment. English is the medium of instruction in Ethiopia. As a result, mastery of the language paves the way for better

understanding of other subjects. Nevertheless, the scores of the candidates under consideration reveal that learners are weak in their language performances which signal the need to take measures to improve the language competence of learners. This can be done by upgrading the quality of teachers, reducing the class size, implementing the communicative approach effectively and involving learners actively in the classroom interaction.

Many scholars are dubious regarding the power of multiple-choice item in measuring examinees' communication abilities. Additionally, the finding shows that the EHEECE fails to discriminate candidates properly, which may be attributed to its test format. Hence, instead of using the multiple choice item solely, which does not give room for interaction to take place and which is not capable to discriminate examinees properly; the EHEECE should involve both subjective and objective items. This will pave the way for the inclusion of a more direct measure of language performance.

According to the finding language proficiency corresponds to academic performance, which holds true, too, between EHEECE and University 1st semester GPA. Their relation is positive but small in the case of the latter. For an effective teaching learning process to take place in higher learning institutions, the EHEECE should assess test takers' proficiency level.

To bring about uniformity about the content and test items of preparatory English examination at the national level, the Ministry of Education should distribute a common checklist to preparatory English teachers. This will bring test fairness across the country. Instead of enrolling detainees to higher

learning without discrimination, a performance of half of the task in both the EHEECE and preparatory English average should be the minimum requirement to join higher learning institutions. This will boost the predictive and explanation powers of both examinations. To narrow the performance gap between males and females students, there is a need to apply appropriate test format and give tutorial classes for female students.

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