



THE ROLE OF ENGLISH PROFICIENCY IN ACCESSING GLOBAL POLITICAL DISCOURSE: INVESTIGATING HOW PROFICIENCY IN ENGLISH AFFECTS POLITICAL SCIENCE STUDENTS' ABILITY TO ENGAGE WITH INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH, JOURNALS, AND CONFERENCES

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Abstract. *English has become the lingua franca of global academia and international political communication. This thesis explores how English proficiency influences political science students' engagement with global political discourse—specifically their access to international research, academic journals, and professional conferences. Using a mixed-methods approach involving surveys and interviews with 120 political science students from three universities in non-English-speaking countries, the research reveals that English proficiency significantly impacts academic participation and access to scholarly resources. Students with higher proficiency levels reported increased engagement with English-language journals, greater confidence in presenting at international conferences, and enhanced understanding of global political trends. Conversely, lower proficiency restricted access to current academic debates and diminished opportunities for scholarly collaboration. The study underscores the need for institutional support to improve language skills, thus fostering equitable participation in the global political science community.*

Keywords: *English proficiency, political science education, global discourse, academic accessibility, linguistic inequality, internationalization of higher education*

Introduction

In an increasingly interconnected world, English serves as the dominant medium of academic and political communication. The global prevalence of English in scholarly publications, conferences, and research collaborations means that proficiency in the language can either empower or constrain access to international knowledge production.

For political science students, engaging with global political discourse requires not only disciplinary expertise but also linguistic competence. Key research in political theory, international relations, and comparative politics is frequently published in English, positioning the language as a gateway to understanding and contributing to worldwide debates (Phillipson, 2016). However, unequal access to English education perpetuates disparities among scholars from different linguistic and socio-economic backgrounds (Crystal, 2019).



This study aims to investigate how English proficiency influences political science students' ability to engage with international academic materials and professional networks. It seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. How does English proficiency affect students' ability to access and understand international political science research?
2. What challenges do students face when engaging with English-language academic materials and conferences?
3. How can institutions support students in overcoming language-related barriers to global academic participation?

Methodology

A mixed-methods design was used to gather quantitative and qualitative data from political science students in three universities (University A, University B, University C) located in non-Anglophone countries.

Participants: 120 undergraduate and graduate students.

Instruments: Online survey (Likert-scale questions on language use and academic engagement) and semi-structured interviews (n = 20).

Data Analysis: Quantitative data analyzed using descriptive statistics; qualitative data coded thematically to identify recurring patterns.

Results and Discussion

Access to Research and Academic Materials

Survey results indicated that 72% of students with high English proficiency regularly accessed English-language political science journals such as *International Organization* and *World Politics*, while only 28% of low-proficiency students did so. Interview responses highlighted that limited vocabulary and difficulty interpreting complex theoretical texts hindered comprehension.

> “I often skip English articles because I struggle with academic jargon,” said one participant, illustrating a linguistic barrier to engagement.

Participation in Conferences and International Networks

High-proficiency students expressed greater confidence in attending and presenting at international conferences. They perceived such events as opportunities for academic growth and networking. Meanwhile, students with lower proficiency described feelings of intimidation and linguistic inadequacy, often opting out of participation.

These findings align with Ammon's (2015) notion of “linguistic capital,” where English proficiency functions as an asset that enhances academic mobility and visibility.

Institutional Support and Perceived Inequality

Students widely reported insufficient institutional language support. Only 35% had access to specialized academic English training, and many suggested integrating English-medium instruction into political science curricula. The study therefore highlights a structural issue—English proficiency is not merely a personal skill but an institutional responsibility.



Conclusion

English proficiency plays a decisive role in determining political science students' access to global academic discourse. Those proficient in English engage more deeply with international research, participate in conferences, and contribute to scholarly debates. Conversely, limited proficiency acts as a barrier, isolating students from global networks and knowledge flows.

To promote inclusive academic participation, universities should:

- * Introduce targeted English for Academic Purposes (EAP) programs;
- * Encourage bilingual publication practices;
- * Provide translation or interpretation support for key academic events.

Ultimately, improving English proficiency is not just about language acquisition—it is about enabling equitable participation in global political dialogue and ensuring that political science remains a diverse, inclusive field.

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