

## **PROFICIENCY IN LINGUISTIC SKILLS: A CASE STUDY OF DELHI GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS**

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### **Abstract**

Language is that unique ability which has helped man to groom himself. Linguistic Proficiency is required to manifest various social behaviours effectively. Learning more than one language is the pressing need of the hour. L<sub>1</sub> (Mother Tongue) is acquired subconsciously while L<sub>2</sub> (Target Language) has to be learnt consciously. This paper tries to investigate the concept of *linguistic proficiency* along with the various facets of language learning herewith. A case study of government schools with regards to secondary and senior secondary level in Delhi has been done peering at the activities done in ESL; the rules and regulations formulated and implemented by the government for pass and promotion, and the skills tested through the annual evaluation in ESL.

**Keywords-** Linguistic Proficiency, Performance, Competence, ESL, Receptive and Productive skills, L<sub>1</sub> and L<sub>2</sub>.

### **A CASE STUDY OF DELHI GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS**

We live in an era of multilingualism today. Language is certainly needed not only to evolve, express our social and individual identities but to forge expansion of one's social, cultural and professional life. In case of L<sub>1</sub> (Mother Tongue), an infant picks up language from his surrounding environment. This process is gradual and acquisition continues as the child grows up. Consequently, he/she achieves proficiency subconsciously and automatically.

Frank Smith, the noted psycholinguist, precisely marked the importance of learning more languages saying, one language sets us in a corridor for life and two languages open every door along the way. Our ability to converse in more than one language is the key to open new avenues for progress and development in this rapidly changing modern world. If one wants to unlock, the key must be the right one. Since learning L<sub>2</sub> (ESL) is a conscious and deliberate process, it is not acquired naturally; it is learnt. With L<sub>2</sub>, a learner expands his ambit of communicative opportunities. Therefore, to learn a second language, a conducive and controlled environment as well as effective facilitator i.e. the teacher is required. The aim of learning L<sub>2</sub> serves its purpose only when the learner is able to communicate proficiently.

An attempt has been made in this paper to look into the proficiency of ESL learners at the level of secondary and senior secondary education in the government schools of Delhi.

I

### 1 .Linguistic Proficiency

Proficiency, generally speaking, means “good at doing something and being proficient is advanced in a branch of knowledge’. (Merriam Webster Dictionary) In other words, proficiency is to attain a high degree or expertise in a particular *skill*. **Linguistic proficiency**, in particular, is the ability to speak or perform in an acquired language by an individual.

In words of Cummins (1983):

“Language proficiency is a concept that extends along two continua: context embedded versus context reduced, where context embedded communication relies on a code of implicit knowledge shared by the speakers and context reduced communication is based on a lack of common knowledge, which forces speakers to elaborate message and use very explicit language in order to avoid misinterpretation”.

( Cummins 120-1)

Julia Penelope, the American linguist, while talking of the function of language comments that it forces us to perceive the world as man presents it to us. While talking of proficiency in language it is very important to know the distinction between the two as it enables us to know the genesis of the error committed while speaking, whether it has been made at the level of doing or knowing. Both parts are crucial as acquiring knowledge only enables a learner to use it and practice greatly improves proficiency.

Further, the concept of competence and performance also needs elaboration here. Linguistic Proficiency is in fact a cluster of abilities at three levels:

- Linguistic Competence/Performance.
- Communicative Competence/Performance.
- Pragmatic Competence/Performance.

#### *Linguistic Competence*

This concept was first developed by the noted linguist Noam Chomsky in the mid 1960s. Linguistic Competence as defined by Chomsky is the idealized understanding of the rules and construction of a given language. It is the conscious or unconscious knowledge of the language learnt at the levels of phonology, morphology, syntax and semantics. Saussure defined it as *Langue*.

“Langue means language all that is, all the rules and conventions regarding the combinations of sounds, formation of words and sentences, pronunciation and meaning.” (Syal 27) Linguistic Competence is mastering all these to create umpteen sentences. Chomsky gave many theories elaborating how a language is acquired and functions within a culture. This concept is a part of a larger theory of *linguistic behaviour* known as ‘Universal Grammar’ which advocates the idea that the children are born with a natural ability to use language (LAD).

#### *Linguistic Performance*

Chomsky defines that ‘Linguistic Performance is the actual use of language in concrete situation’. (Chomsky 31) It is a learner’s ability to use knowledge of language he has amassed. Chomsky opines that performance is full of errors.

Saussure termed it as *Parole*. “*Parole* belongs to the individual, when those conventions that exist in the mind as *Langue* are used in a concrete form in actual speech or writing they become instances of *Parole*.” (Syal 28)

This is what a speaker actually does with the language. This actual performance, practical application of theoretical knowledge is not flawless. This performance is influenced by many factors like learner’s competence, attention, memory, physical condition, desires, beliefs, speaker’s idiolect, dialect etc. Besides actual use of language in real situation may vary from the speaker’s linguistic competence. Thus, this execution of knowledge may be faulty as it is influenced by both grammatical errors and nonlinguistic factors.

### ***Communicative Competence***

The term was first used by the noted sociolinguist Dell Hymes in 1972. It is both the stored knowledge of language in a person’s mind and his ability to use it. Communicative Competence is the second step in language learning it is a shift from grammar acquisition to knowledge of workability. It is the knowledge of how language is used; a shift from form to function. Hymes calls it ‘public function’ of language. It emanates knowledge regarding cohesion and coherence in various contexts. Communicative competence determines what socially appropriate speech is. This competence refers to the type of speech permissible within the cultural context.

### ***Communicative Performance***

It is the demonstration of appropriate communicative behaviour. It is a speaker’s ability to manifest his/her competence behaviourally, modification in behaviour is perceived. This is the actual performance of the language in social situations. This can be judged by a speaker’s ability to engage in appropriate communicative behaviour in particular situations.

### ***Pragmatic Competence***

Pragmatics is the study of the relationships between linguistic forms and users of those forms. The term *pragmatic competence* was coined in 1930 by C.W.Morris. This is a step next to *communicative competence*, the earlier one talks of the contextual use while *pragmatic competence* talks not only of appropriate contextual use but also actual speech situations. This is a fundamental aspect of more general *communicative competence*. The knowledge of usage of language is different from language itself. This competence is the ability to use appropriate grammatical form for varied communicative functions in a variety of sociolinguistic context.

### ***Pragmatic Performance***

Meanings are in people not in words. Pragmatic performance is about socio lingual behaviour. A learner must be aware of the results of making pragmatic choices while using language. This gives importance to both the participants in communication and social relationships. Interpersonal encounters are required to judge pragmatic performance.

A native speaker can effectively and successfully influence other people’s course of action by his meticulous selection of words, culturally fit phrases and permissible expressions to evoke emotive responses. But this becomes a long cherished and far-fetched dream for an ESL learner. To realize this dream, he/she must acquire good linguistic skills.

## 2 .Language Skills

Language is considered as a subject with a set of skills. Four basic linguistic skills are considered important for a language learner: *Listening*, *Reading*, *Speaking* and *Writing*. While teaching and learning ESL, acquisition of these skills is the prime pedagogical aim. *Listening* and *Reading* involve receiving systematic messages while *Speaking* and *Writing* involve production of utterances/messages; so these skills respectively can be categorized in two: *Receptive skills and Productive skills*. The acquisition of these communication skills is a necessity for effective participation in a society. Language develops as a whole and a language teacher attempts to work in a direction to develop both receptive and productive skills in a natural order.

All the four skills viz. *listening*, *reading*, *speaking*, and *writing*, skills are used in synchronization. The acquisition of these language skills is closely dependent on the individual learner. In Indian environment most of the ESL learners need intensive practice of the skills and few can learn these intuitively. Ample training is required to make the learner proficient. Only a proficient ESL learner can make habitual and instinctive use of L<sub>2</sub>. Taking an overview of the Receptive and Productive communication skills, it can be said that their concordance and concomitance is functionally important. Before developing the argument further, deeper understanding of the four skills is significant.

### *Listening*

Listening is the first skill. This is the initial stage of language learning. Listening is a positive activity and an active process. A language learner should be capable of picking up sounds of the language. The learner should be able to do the following:

- Recognize speech sounds in isolation as well in combination.
- Know distinction in similar sounds in his mother tongue.
- Understand grammatical and lexical meaning of the structure.
- Comprehend stress and intonation patterns.
- Understand speech at normal conversational speed.
- Guess/anticipate words and phrases from the context.
- Comprehend/ judge the meaning of unfamiliar words from the context.

“Listening is more complex than merely hearing. It is a process that consists of four stages: sensing and attending, understanding and interpreting, remembering and responding”. (Steinberg 76) Listening is a creative process. The listener remains busy in a continuous intellectual process where attention and memory, these two mental processes are much involved. A listener creates a message from linguistic (phonic material) and extra linguistic (situation and the speaker if physically present) inputs. Aural comprehension is basic essence of a communicative situation. A listener has to face an immense variety of societies, individual situations, and types of oral discourse. According to Wilkinson (1985) this skill has two components:

- **Receptive** –This component primarily deals with accuracy in listening. The listener listens and observes each and every detail of the sound stream and keeps in mind a series of the details. It also includes the ability to follow oral directions.
- **Reflective** – This component primarily deals with the ability to draw justifiable inferences. Listener uses contextual clues, recognizes elements and relationships between main and subordinate ideas.

There are two kinds of listening: *Intensive Listening*, in which detailed comprehension of meaning is stressed upon. The listener identifies all the features of grammar, vocabulary pronunciation etc. *Extensive listening* is done just for the sake of gathering information and enjoyment. There can be infinite listening situations.

As a matter of fact a real life listening situation is normally rich in environmental clues. We cannot afford to see the development of listening skill as a mechanistic and isolated activity. The context where listening takes place is very important. A listener usually has a preconceived idea of the content of the discourse he is going to hear about. Our expectation may be affected by our purpose of listening. There is an association between listener expectation and purpose on one hand and comprehension on the other. The results of poor listening could be disastrous in social, professional relations and business employment/ in trade as well. We can more accurately listen and understand what we expect to listen than those unexpected, irrelevant and unhelpful. In a real life listening experience when a listener is face to face with the speaker, he gets some sort of feedback from the audience in the form of eye contact, facial expression, interruptions and note taking etc. This is called *overt response*. A number of techniques (situations) can be there to teach and evaluate listening skills like dictation, sports commentary, follow a route, making a plan, radio news bulletin, playing record for interviews and story session etc.

### **Reading**

Reading is a receptive skill. This is a developmental process ranging from reading sound symbols, words, sentences paragraphs, short passages to whole texts. The main purpose of reading is to comprehend. While reading one has to predict, infer and assume. Reading demands an active effort on the part of the reader because meaning is not always lying in the text and has to be absorbed passively and readily. A reader becomes more efficient and reading more fruitful if there is a shared assumption between reader and the writer. Our aim must be to motivate learners to read with an alert and critical mind. Reading as discussed earlier takes place in a context rather than in isolation. Bubber (1947) referring to previous knowledge stored in the reader's mind says a reader does not find meaning lying in things nor does one puts it into things, but between the reader and things it can happen. While reading, knowledge of conventional situation, background knowledge and ability to overcome barriers like vague words, is important.

Reading consists of three elements: the symbol, the sound and the sense. Reading comprehensively can be developed in a learner step by step. The process of reading can be divided into three stages:

- *Recognition Stage* – A learner learns to recognize the Figureics of phonological items and spelling rules.
- *Structuring Stage* – A learner learns about syntactic relationships and structural meaning of the syntactic units.
- *Interpretation Stage* – The highest level where a learner understands not only verbal meaning but also the significance of the words, sentences and phrases used in the discourse. This is the ultimate aim of the whole process of reading. At this stage a reader not only reads but enjoys and grows.

Reading can be done in two ways:

- *Oral Reading (Reading aloud)* – This is crucial at initial stage, as it motivates young children. This plays a great role in improving listening ability and pronunciation. It also works as effective device for testing reading comprehension.

- *Silent Reading* – This is reading with comprehension. Reading aloud prepares base for silent reading. It is useful at the advanced level of learning a language.

There are two kinds of reading:

- *Intensive Reading* - Here a reader not only comprehends but analyses (pays attention to) the sentence structures and vocabulary. This is a highly potent means of language learning. Dr. West, the renowned linguist, considered it the only practicable means of learning a foreign language. Intensive reading should serve as a means to Extensive reading.
- *Extensive reading* – This can also be labelled as pleasure reading. Here primary object is general comprehension, not language study. A competent reader is the one who can well interpret the written code from graphic-phonemic to contextual level.

### ***Speaking***

Language is primarily speech. *Speaking* is the skill that the students will be judged upon most in real life situations. It is an important part of everyday interaction and most often the first impression of a person is based on his or her ability to speak fluently. This is a productive skill and makes a learner more active in the language process. It is a learner's ability to articulate sounds using specific language. We speak whenever there is a need to express our ideas, desires and to establish social relations. Correct speech is the selection of befitting words in form of meaningful units. While learning, ESL it becomes crucial that the learner gets maximum opportunity to speak. In some advanced countries the effectiveness of a lesson is judged by the ratio of *pupil speaking time* and *teacher speaking time*. While speaking language is used in two ways: *transactional language* and *interactional language*. The first one is meant for factual information and the latter one is used to maintain and establish social relations, here content is not as important as the expression is.

M.Jesa describes the skill of speaking is “a speaker's ability to produce speech sounds and patterns in isolation and combination, recall and use word structures, use appropriate stress and intonation and has the ability to adjust his speech according to the listener, situation and the topic.”( Jesa 10)

### ***Writing***

Writing is a productive skill and at the first stage refers to forming of symbols and ranges up to creative writing. Unlike speech writing is a solitary activity there is no face to face interaction with a hearer or no feedback is there in the form of verbal and non-verbal gestures. Writing has limited resources; a writer cannot make use of accent, intonation, rhythm etc. To convey the intended meaning and regulate the expression, the devices that can be used are: punctuation marks, underlining, paragraphing, bold and capital letters, use of models, connectors, and poetic devices etc. It is a skill which demands manipulating structuring and communicating. This skill depends a lot on the writer's imagination, sensitivity, state of mind mood and his competence.

This is considered to be the most difficult of all the language skills to master. It needs practice and synchronization of transcription grammar and composition. A learner, who can express himself in writing English should be able to write at a reasonable speed, knows correct spellings and word order, punctuation, sentence connectors and use of appropriate register as per the requirement of subject matter and reader. “Writing calls for effective training because real-life writing is purpose-driven and it involves highly complex sets of processes.” (Tikoo 57)

Writing is successful only when it is reader directed so that it successfully delivers the intended message. It should be planned. The selection of appropriate vocabulary and right punctuation marks placed correctly make the written words lucid and enjoyable.

### 3 .Case Study

To make a learner proficient in ESL, to handle all communicative situations deftly, especially in the school years, all the four skills should be taught in a manner that brings in a synthesis of these four skills. Investigation in the area of linguistic proficiency in ESL is presented herewith as a case study. The scope of this investigation encompasses students from Grade 8 to Grade 10+2.

**Hypothesis:** For the retention of academic success of students, adequate and suitable strategies should be adopted to inculcate the four skills. Efforts should be put measuring the kind of language proficiency the student presumably needs in order to achieve their aim. Development of ESL proficiency can be accomplished with the help of a skill oriented curriculum design, teaching practices, course delivery, making the learners to take tests for cumulative assessment; subsequent improving upon the results as per the requirement.

**Methodology:** Data has been culled from 2009 to 2013 i.e. last five years. The range of sampling is from Grade 8 to Grade 10+2. Besides, some government policies, handling of the classroom teaching and assessment of skills in the subject are considered with reference to L<sub>1</sub> and L<sub>2</sub>.

**Overview of Govt. Policies:** Regarding government policies with reference to pass, promotion, and improvement of the results for the students from class I—XII, Government notification regarding Class I-III (Dixit ) says:

“No student shall be detained on the basis of performance in pre- primary classes I,II,III promotion from these classes to the next higher class shall be automatic subject to fulfillment of the eligibility conditions in respect of attendance i.e. 75% during the academic session.” (Dte. Of Edn, Sch.Br, No. F.D.E./Sch// Promotion Rules/9/2001/18663-20963, dt.8.9.2001)

Government notification regarding Class IV-IX & XI says:

- Grading system up to class X.
- A student of these classes must secure 33% in each subject studied by him during the academic session.
- Promotion in any subject with grace marks as per rules is subjected to the condition of minimum 25% marks in the subject in the comprehensive test.
- A student of class IV-VIII will have to obtain a minimum of 25% marks in 3<sup>rd</sup> language in order to get promoted.
- A student of class IX will have to obtain passing marks in any of two languages of the three languages in order to get promoted.
- From class IV-VII all the students who are not able to pass even after moderation will get another chance through compartment examination. The compartment will be given to them

without considering their marks in the subject. And the students who could not appear partly or wholly in the CASE for whatever the reason will be given a chance. (Dte. Of Edn. Exam. Cell No.DE.5/Exam/1808-1814,dt.19.3.08)

- The student of class VIII who obtained grade E1, E2 are required to improve their performance in subsequent 5 attempts while a student of class IX will get only one chance and he would not be eligible to get admission in class X till his improvement. (Question papers will be set by the school and the exams will be conducted within a month of the declaration of the result.)
- The students who could not improve upon after the compartmental exam can't be refused admission in the school.
- A class XI student is required to get a minimum of 33% in each subject that he studied during the academic session. In order to get compartment, maximum in two subjects, he needs to secure a minimum of 20% in the compartmental subject.

The government Circular (2009) speaks with regard to the grading system “the board has discontinued the practice of declaring compartment or fail.”(CBSE, No.40CE/CBSE/ACAD dt.29-9 -2009) A student of class X needs to get a minimum of 33% in each subject that he studied during the academic session. He may get reappear in two subjects provided he secures a minimum of 25% in the compartmental subject. A student of class X is required to get pass in any two out of three languages. A student of class XII too will have to secure a minimum of 33% in each of the five subjects that he studied in the academic session. He may get reappear only in one subject.

General government instructions for schools:

- Periodical evaluation with the help of unit tests (III-XII). For each subject total 4 in a session for grade III to XI and total 3 for class XII.
- Weekly assessment is the base for suitable remedial steps and follow ups.
- CCEP exams, twice in a session.
- CCE method (SA1, SA2, FA1 &FA2)
- PSA for class IX and XI. (cir. No:Acad 35/2013)
- OTBA in Eng for class IX only. (cir. No: Acad5/2014)
- Remedial classes in vacations.
- Zero period, block teaching, mock test for X & XII classes.
- Teacher's Diary (a complete record of teacher's teaching methods, syllabus and evaluation).
- Student's diary (a complete guide to syllabus, assessment pattern and important dates).
- Teacher's seminars.
- CASE (centralized exams for proper evaluation).

**Curriculum and Teaching Practices:** English as a Second Language is introduced to the students from nursery class. It is a part of their daily school study hours. So when a student completes his senior secondary class he/she has studied the ESL for almost 12 years.

**Study Material:** The prescribed syllabus and study material remains a good mix of prose and verse; exercises entail the chapters having scope to teach writing and reading. Class VI-IX are given various activities (SA1, SA2, FA1 & FA2) awarding marks and grades which are added on



for final grades for pass and promotion. From 2013 onwards, for IX to XII in each class, one English Novel has been prescribed to give impetus to Reading Activity (Introduced in 2013-14).

Let us have a glance at the ESL activities done in schools for Grade 8 to Grade 12.

**Grade VIII (Table 1)**

| Class<br>(Table2) | Listening | Reading | Speaking        | Writing                        |
|-------------------|-----------|---------|-----------------|--------------------------------|
|                   |           |         |                 | One act play                   |
|                   |           |         | Poem recitation | project on Natural Calamities. |
|                   |           |         |                 | Project on Indian festivals .  |
|                   |           |         |                 | Grammar based worksheet.       |
|                   |           |         |                 | Pictorial chart of a poem.     |
|                   |           |         |                 | Collage (Role of women)        |
|                   |           |         |                 | Grammar Chart Making           |

| Class X<br>(Table3) | Listening | Reading | Speaking      | Writing                                |
|---------------------|-----------|---------|---------------|--|
|                     |           |         |               | Poem recitation                        |
|                     |           |         | Story telling | A chart on tenses.                     |
|                     |           |         | Debate        | Character sketch.                      |
|                     |           |         | Role play     | Poster making.                         |
|                     | (ASL)     |         | 10 Min. (ASL) | Project on Indian poets                |
|                     |           |         |               | Project on musical instrument.         |
|                     |           |         |               | Project on Science (uses & misuses).   |
|                     |           |         |               | Article writing<br>*Poem with picture. |
|                     |           |         |               | * Project on famous tennis player      |
|                     |           |         |               | Speech writing.                        |

|                  | <b>Reading</b> | <b>Speaking</b>                   | <b>Writing</b>                    |
|------------------|----------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| <b>Listening</b> |                |                                   |                                   |
|                  |                | Story telling.                    | Project on Tenses                 |
|                  |                | Poem recitation.                  | Report writing                    |
|                  |                | Dialogue in form of conversation. | Assignment on mobile and website. |
|                  |                | One act play                      | Fill gaps in story                |
|                  |                | Debate                            | *Story completion                 |
|                  |                | Role play.                        | Project on Assam                  |
|                  |                | Speech.                           | Project on famous scientist       |
| ASL              |                | ASL                               | Poem on Chart                     |

**Class XI (Table 4)**

| <b>Listening</b>        | <b>Reading</b> | <b>Speaking</b>                             | <b>Writing</b>      |
|-------------------------|----------------|---|---------------------|
| ASL(introduced in 2014) | Novel (2014)   | 10 minute speaking ASL (introduced in 2014) | Annual Written Exam |

**Class XII (Table 5)**

| <b>Listening</b> | <b>Reading</b> | <b>Speaking</b> | <b>Writing</b>      |
|------------------|----------------|-----------------|---------------------|
|                  | Novel (2014)   |                 | Annual Written Exam |

**Table 1** showcase class activities of Grade VIII, clearly depicts, that there is no activity done to support the teaching of *Listening* and *Reading skills*. Nominal activities have been carried out to teach speaking skills. *Writing skill* is stressed upon which is otherwise also the only skill which is tested and emphasised through mid-term and annual written exams.

**Tables 2&3** showcase that the class activities for Grades IX & X narrate almost the same story. The only change is the induction of ASL (Assessment of Speaking and Listening skills) implemented for the first time in 2013-2014. It tests *Speaking and listening* skills.

**Table 4** marks the activities of Grade XI. Here, the class activity in ESL is confined to ASL only.

**Table 5** showcase activities for Grade XII which candidly speaks that only *Writing* skill is tested and accentuated through mid-term, pre- board, mock exam and annual board exams. Whereas teaching of *Listening Reading and Speaking* skills is totally neglected

**Assessment (Formative and Summative):** The results of the last five years from Grades VIII—XII have been investigated. . At the end of every academic session a student is assessed. The testing and evaluation methods are based on the instructions and guidelines by the school authorities directed by the education department. The annual assessment is an aggregate of *summative assessment, formative assessment, activity assignments, unit test, CCEP (Continuous Comprehensive Evaluation Process), PSA (Problem Solving Ability) and written exams.* All are accumulated in the annual marks.

- For class VIII 10% of the total 100 marks is for activities, 10% is for attendance and 80% of the total 100 is for written exam.
- For class IX and X out of 100 marks 30 % is given to activities and 70 % is for written exams.
- For class XI out of total 100 marks 20% is for ASL.
- For class XII there is only and only single written exam for 100 marks.

The Results of Grades VIII to X have been analysed keeping two parameters:

1. Mother Tongue vs. English ( Two Mediums of Instruction)
2. L<sub>1</sub> vs. L<sub>2</sub> (Mother Tongue vs. English)

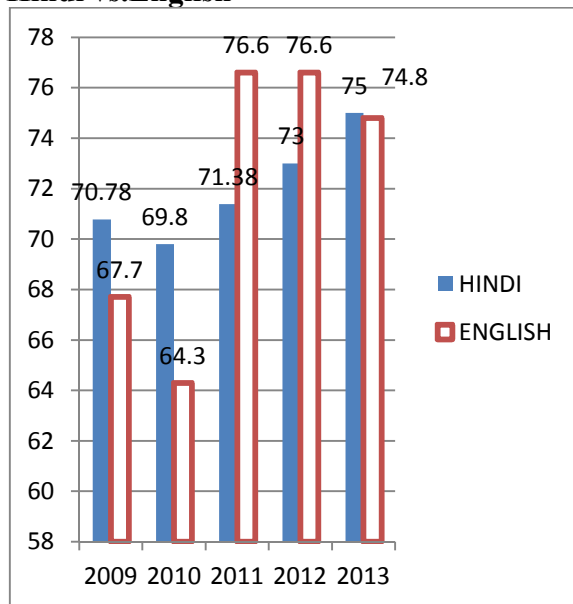
In these government schools mother tongue is Hindi (L<sub>1</sub>) second language is English (L<sub>2</sub>). The Medium of Instruction can be either L<sub>1</sub> or L<sub>2</sub> if English is opted as the medium of instruction only Mathematics, Science and English subjects are studied in English language( rest of the subjects are in Hindi medium).

Two Figures for each Grade from VIII—X are placed below.

**Class VIII (Medium of instruction)**

**Language as Subject**

**Hindi vs.English**

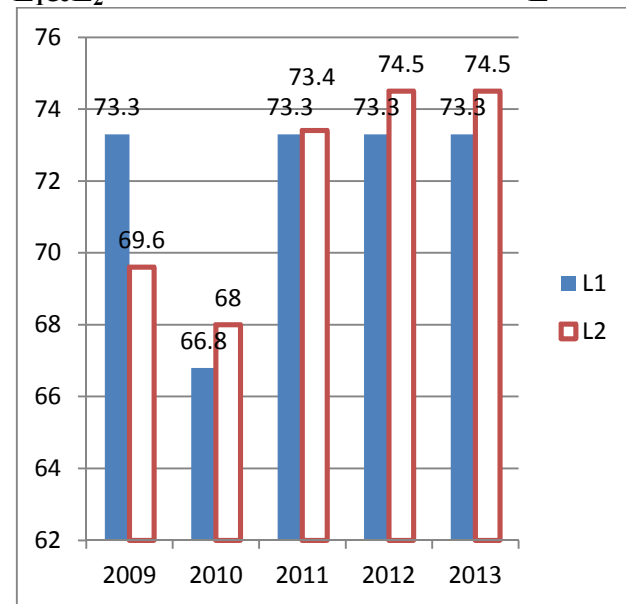


‘X’ (Year)

Figure-1

**L<sub>1</sub>&L<sub>2</sub>**

**L**

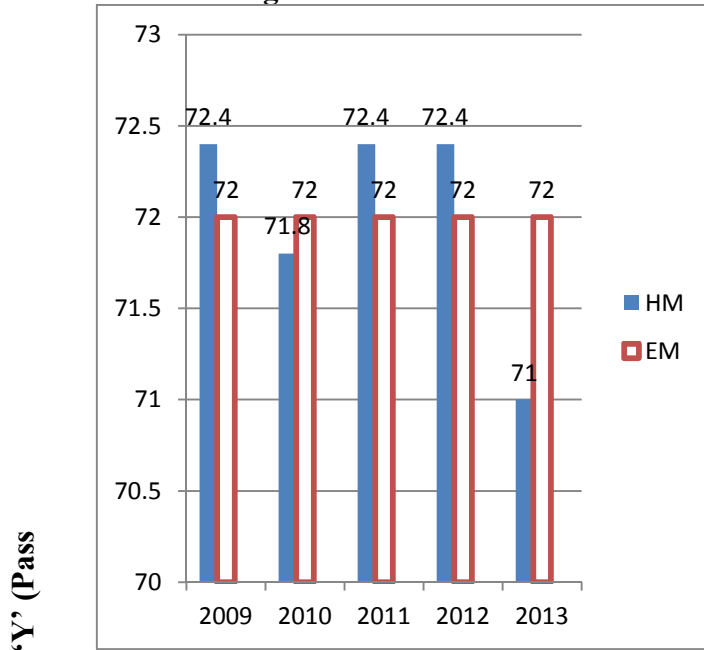


‘X’ (Year)

Figure-2

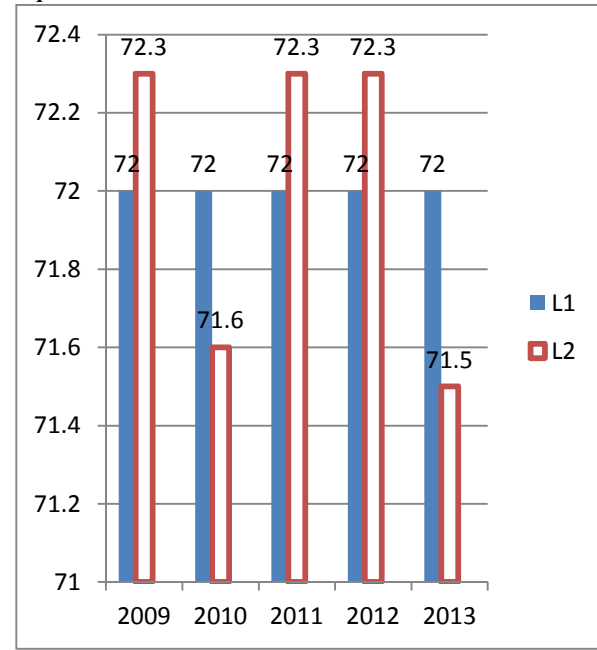
‘Y’ (Pass)

**Class IX (Medium of instruction)  
 Hindi vs. English**



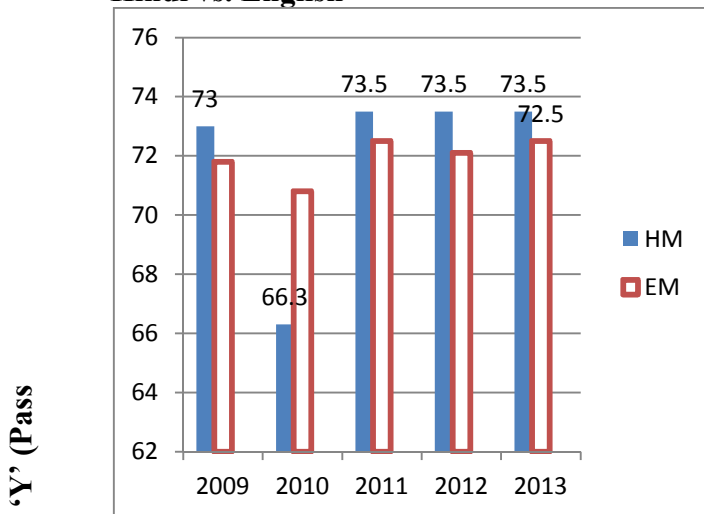
'X' (Year)  
**Figure 1**

**Language as Subject  
 L<sub>1</sub>**



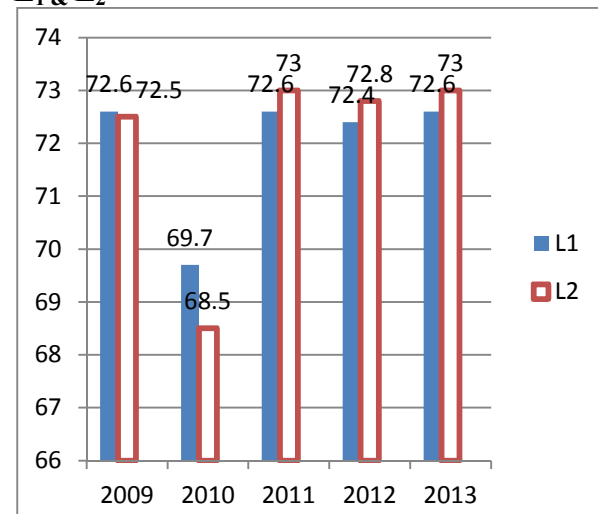
'X' (Year)  
**Figure 1**

**Class X (Medium of instruction)  
 Hindi vs. English**



'X' (Year)  
**Figure-1**

**Language as Subject  
 L<sub>1</sub> & L<sub>2</sub>**



'X' (Year)  
**Figure-2**

The interpretation of these bar diagrams and the observations are thereof discussed below:

**Category I Figures 1 from Grade 8 to Grade 10 clearly show** a general trend for the year 2009 that the medium of instruction affected the pass percentage. Hindi Medium ( $L_1$ ) students scored better than English Medium students. But this factor stopped influencing the results 2010 onwards as the government inducted ‘Non Detention Policy’ in March 2009. Besides this grade system was implemented in true spirit. Induction of Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation put a great check on number of failures as the board discontinued the practice of declaring compartment or fail. Furthermore, the students up to Grade 8 irrespective of their performance will be promoted to the next grade, and the students of Grade 9 and Grade 10 getting the low grades i.e.  $E_1$  or  $E_2$  shall have to improve their performance through subsequent five attempts.

**Figure 2 from Grade 8 to Grade 10 shows** a trend that the students perform better in  $L_2$  than  $L_1$  when  $L_2$  is studied as a subject. This indicates that the students can cram and deliver  $L_2$  for exams but they cannot use it well as a medium of expression.

The above discussed government policies, charts of classroom activities, and results indicate the following observation:

- Due to promotive schemes like: provision of free books, uniform and stationary, mid day meals, and various scholarships, the students are attracted towards schools. CCE, Grading system, No Detention Policy and consequently a ban on declaring compartment and fail all are contributing factors in an upsurge in pass percentage.
- The activity charts present statistics that even while training and assessing in a skill based subject all the four linguistic skills are neither being chiseled nor tested equally.
- The evaluation method is much inclined to test writing skills throughout the session and the pattern is same for the final assessment.

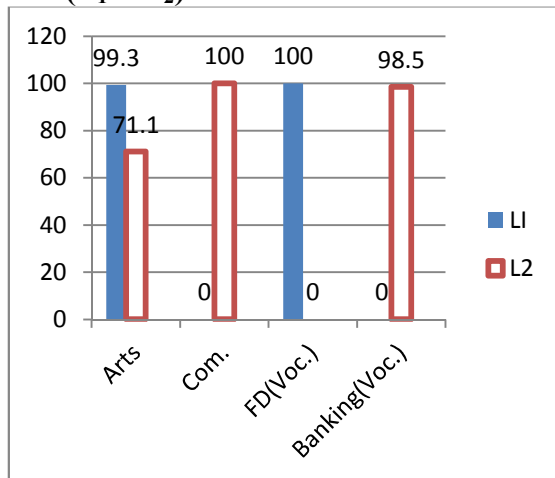
As a matter of fact all the four fundamental skills need balanced development for developing a proficient communicative ability. The ability to read and write only cannot make one proficient in a language. Emphasizing the need to develop both *Receptive* and *Productive* skills Dr. Mukherjee says:

“...we have directed the major part of our effort towards the securing of language specific performance. While it is necessary to strengthen the performance of the pupils in particular languages( for which we carry out conventional exercises ), it is equally necessary to create among the pupils some basic sensitivity to language, some awareness of general language facts and a genuine desire to use language for real life communication.”(10)

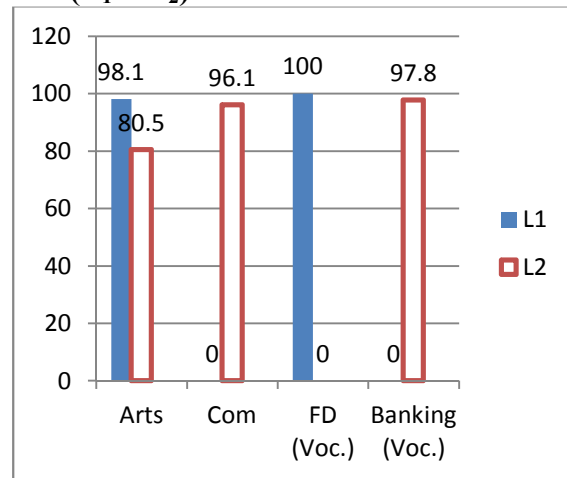
**Category II Class XI and XII** In the case of, Class XI and XII students have choice to opt for various subjects. At the end of the session, the students take annual tests meant for their subjects. Herein, the results of  $L_1$  &  $L_2$  have been investigated from 2009 to 2013. The parameter for evaluation of these classes is not the medium of instruction but the faculty they have opted for further study. Therefore,  $L_1$  &  $L_2$  become optional. Consequently overall performance in *Linguistic proficiency* in the subjects Hindi and English is studied. Moreover, it is imperative to tell that the results of Arts, Commerce and Vocational courses (Fashion Designing and Banking in Commerce) have been collected.

**Class XI**  
**(Faculty Wise Performance Index)**  
**(2009 -2013)**

**2009(L<sub>1</sub>& L<sub>2</sub>)**



**2010(L<sub>1</sub>& L<sub>2</sub>)**

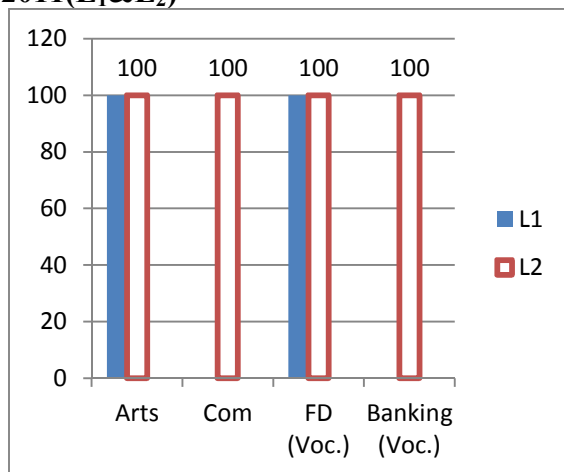


‘Y’ (Pass

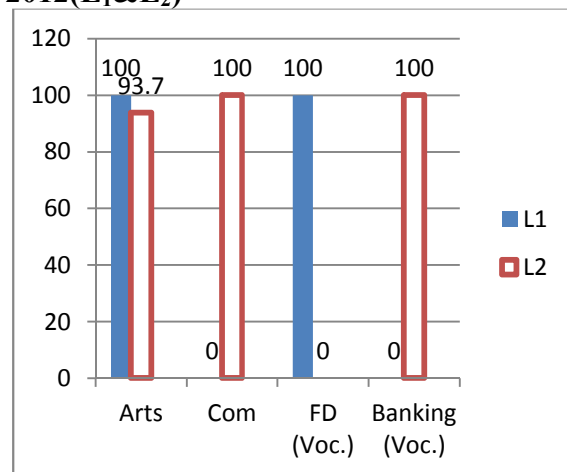
‘X’ (Faculty)  
**Figure -1**

‘X’ (Faculty)  
**Figure -2**

**2011(L<sub>1</sub>&L<sub>2</sub>)**



**2012(L<sub>1</sub>&L<sub>2</sub>)**

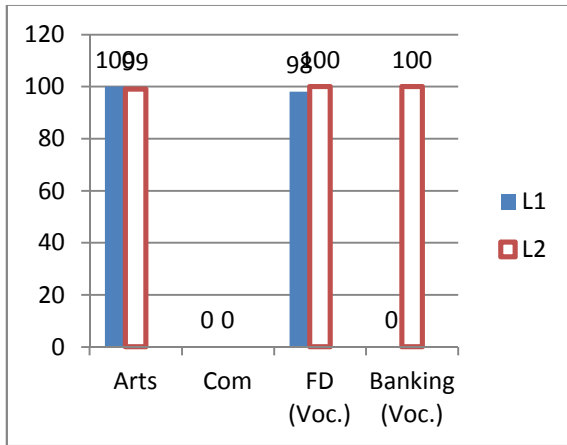


‘Y’ (Pass

‘X’ (Faculty)  
**Figure-3**

‘X’ (Faculty)  
**Figure-4**

**2013(L<sub>1</sub>&L<sub>2</sub>)**

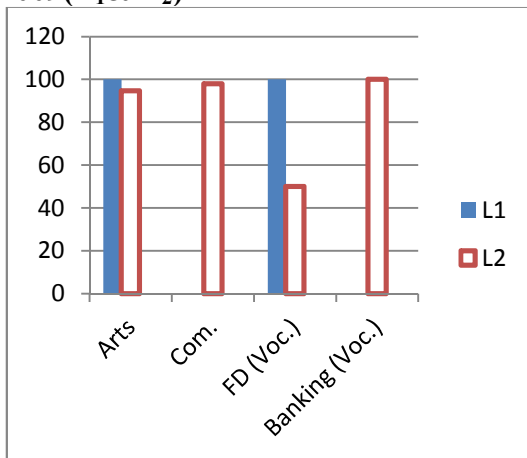


‘Y’ (Pass

‘X’ (Faculty)  
**Figure-5**

**Class XII  
 Faculty Wise Performance Index**

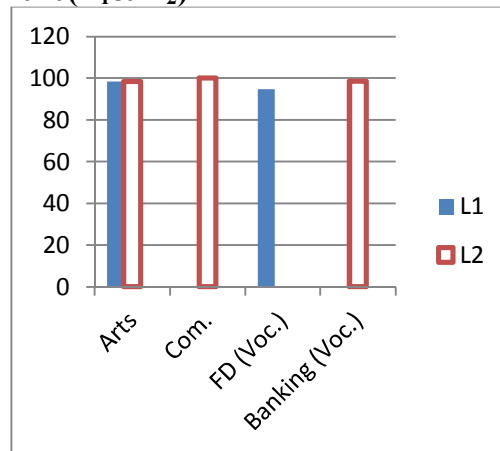
**2009(L<sub>1</sub>& L<sub>2</sub>)**



‘Y’ (Pass

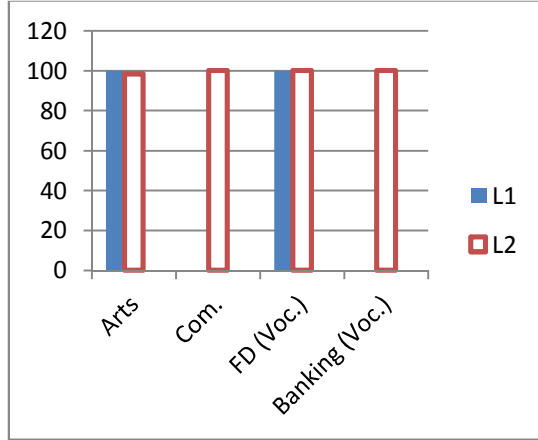
‘X’ (Faculty)  
**Figure-1**

**2010(L<sub>1</sub>& L<sub>2</sub>)**



‘X’ (Faculty)  
**Figure-2**

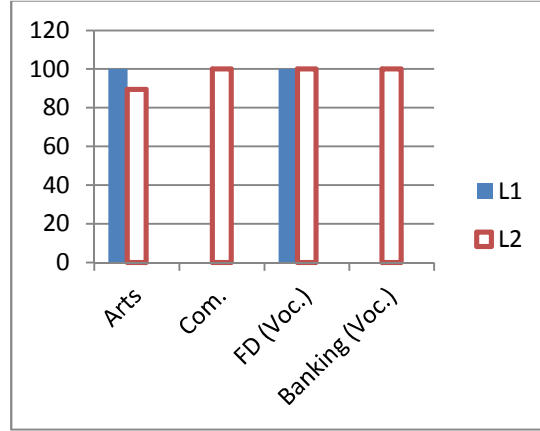
**2011(L1Vs.L2)**



‘Y’ (Pass)

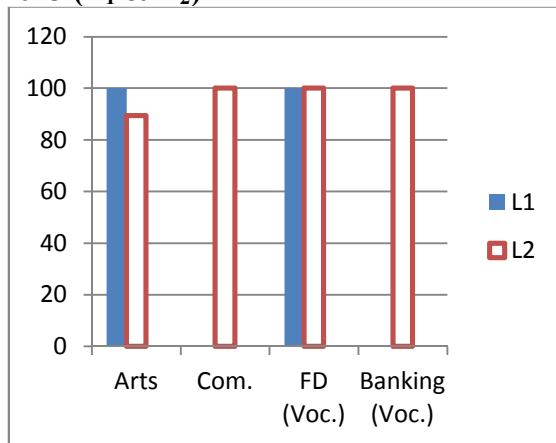
‘X’ (Faculty)  
**Figure-3**

**2012(L1Vs.L2)**



‘X’ (Faculty)  
**Figure-4**

**2013 (L<sub>1</sub> & L<sub>2</sub>)**



‘Y’ (Pass)

‘X’ (Faculty)  
**Figure-5**

**Observation**



- The students of Commerce and Banking exercise their choice and opt for L<sub>2</sub>. They study L<sub>2</sub> by choice. The Figures 1-5 for XI & XII show a general trend that they score good percentage.
- The students of Arts can study both L<sub>1</sub> and L<sub>2</sub>. They do have a choice to opt or quit L<sub>2</sub>. Many students exercise this choice and opt for *Sanskrit*. The students of Fashion Designing and Typing etc. also drop L<sub>2</sub>. The Figures 1-5 for XI & XII show that the Arts students who opt for L<sub>2</sub> do not perform well in L<sub>2</sub>. Their score in L<sub>1</sub> is better than L<sub>2</sub>.

**Conclusion:** The above discussed government policies, charts of classroom activities, and results bring out the following fact to surface:

- Given a choice, a student drops L<sub>2</sub> and opts for L<sub>1</sub> as a subject.
- No provision is made by government school to offer L<sub>2</sub> as medium of instruction.
- In grade 10+1, the development of listening and speaking skills is much neglected (ASL is introduced in 2014).
- In grade 10+2 scene is even worse throughout the year only Writing skill is emphasised and tested.
- Negligible focus on the rest of the *Language Skills*, results in fractured proficiency.

A report by The Hindu (7<sup>th</sup> May 2014) echoes the same views when it makes a survey of the govt. schools of Delhi and across the country. The report calls “**English a casualty in govt. schools**”.



“The Hindu A1”

English in the government schools is taught like a subject and not as a skill oriented language. The teaching of language as ESL in the government schools requires reviewing and restructuring seriously. It seems that the Directorate of Education has also realized the aforesaid facts and they have started to take some revolutionary steps:

- For maximum output and achievement of proficiency ASL is introduced from Grades 9 to 11 in the session 2013-2014.
- SST books to the students of English medium students will be provided in English from grades 3 to 7 in April 2014
- Novels in curriculum have been introduced from Grade 9, to promote extended and long reading.
- OTBA (Open Text Book Assessment)

Though the government is taking some initiatives, yet a lot needs to be done in this direction. A thorough investigation of the problem, designing a remedial plan and restructuring is certainly required. Implementation of policies and teacher training is another crucial area, where strenuous efforts are required by the stake holders. Some **suggestions** for improvement of *Linguistic Proficiency* are placed below:

- From the very beginning i.e. from the nursery English should be taught as a skill subject.
- Pronunciation, intonation and stress pattern must be taught in the formative years.
- The syllabi must have a scope to teach all the four skills and develop the ability to face real life communication or interaction.
- ASL should be introduced in upper primary classes.
- Cramming should be discouraged, drill and cognitive skills need to be balanced.
- Simulated activities should be a part of the curricula.
- The reading material be accompanied with audio/video.
- Listening, speaking and creative writing activity should be an integral part of the syllabi.
- Language labs/multimedia should be mandatory for schools so that all the four skills are properly taught and refined.

To make the whole process of teaching English as a second language successful, the syllabi should be **market oriented** and teaching should be **job oriented**.

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