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# BRIDGING RESEARCH PARADIGMS IN LANGUAGE LEARNING: A QUANTITATIVE SYSTEMATIC ANALYSIS OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY COMPONENTS, PEDAGOGICAL DETERMINANTS, AND EVIDENCE-BASED IMPLICATIONS FOR SECONDARY EDUCATION WITHIN DIVERSE SOCIOCULTURAL CONTEXTS

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## ABSTRACT

English language proficiency (ELP) is increasingly recognized as a fundamental competency essential for academic achievement, career advancement, and global participation in secondary school contexts. This quantitative study conducted a systematic analysis of English language proficiency among 345 secondary school students (Grades 9-11) from diverse educational institutions in Chennai, India. The research examined relationships between overall language proficiency, constituent skill components (vocabulary, grammar, listening comprehension, speaking fluency, reading comprehension, writing accuracy), pedagogical variables (teaching methodology, teacher qualification, instructional resources), and sociodemographic factors (gender, socioeconomic status, medium of instruction, prior achievement). Cross-sectional quantitative design with standardized language assessments and validated instruments was employed. Results from one-way ANOVA revealed statistically significant main effects of grade level on overall ELP scores ( $F(2,342) = 48.67, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .221$ ), with Grade 11 students demonstrating markedly superior proficiency ( $M = 72.45, SD = 9.87$ ) compared to Grade 9 students ( $M = 54.23, SD = 13.42$ ). Multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) identified significant multivariate effects across skill components by grade level (Wilks'  $\Lambda = .612, F(12,670) = 17.89, p < .001$ ). Hierarchical regression analysis identified grade level ( $\beta = 7.24, p < .001$ ), teacher qualification ( $\beta = 2.18, p = .012$ ), and instructional resources ( $\beta = 1.89, p = .028$ ) as significant predictors, collectively accounting for 34.2% of ELP variance ( $R^2 = .342, RMSE = 9.34$ ). Gender showed negligible effects ( $d = 0.08$ ), while socioeconomic status and medium of instruction demonstrated complex interactions. These findings underscore the necessity of grade-appropriate, skill-integrated language instruction aligned with pedagogical quality and

*institutional resource allocation in secondary education systems. Implications for language teaching curriculum development, teacher preparation, and educational policy are discussed within diverse sociocultural contexts.*

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**KEYWORDS:** English language proficiency, secondary education, language components, pedagogical determinants, quantitative analysis, sociocultural contexts, India.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background and Significance

English language proficiency has emerged as a critical component of contemporary educational systems globally, particularly within the South Asian context where English functions as a primary medium of academic instruction and a gateway to higher education and professional opportunities (Crystal, 2003; Kachru, 2005). Despite decades of educational emphasis, substantial proportions of secondary school students in India demonstrate inadequate English language proficiency across multiple dimensions—listening, speaking, reading, writing, and grammar competence (CEFR, 2018; TOEFL, 2019).

The phenomenon of English language proficiency deficiency among secondary students in India is not merely an isolated pedagogical challenge; rather, it reflects systemic complexities spanning instructional methodology, teacher preparation, resource allocation, institutional capacity, and broader sociocultural factors that shape language learning trajectories (Pandey, 2018). Metropolitan centers like Chennai present particularly rich research contexts due to their linguistic diversity, institutional heterogeneity, socioeconomic stratification, and exposure to multilingual communication practices that characterize contemporary urban education environments (Annamalai, 2004).

Contemporary research paradigms increasingly recognize English language proficiency not as a monolithic construct but rather as a complex, multidimensional phenomenon comprising interconnected skill components—vocabulary knowledge, grammatical competence, listening comprehension, speaking fluency, reading comprehension, and writing accuracy—that develop through dynamic interactions with pedagogical quality, teacher expertise, institutional resources, and learner characteristics (Bachman & Palmer, 1996; Alderson et al., 2015).

### 1.2 Problem Statement and Research Gap

Despite recognition of English language proficiency's importance, empirical research specifically examining the relationships among proficiency components, pedagogical determinants, and sociocultural variables remains limited in the Indian secondary education context. Existing studies frequently employ limited outcome measures, fail to examine multiple predictor domains simultaneously, or provide insufficient statistical depth for understanding complex interactions (Prabhu, 2012;

Canagarajah, 2013).

Furthermore, the relationship between pedagogical quality—encompassing teacher qualification, instructional methodology, resource availability, and classroom practices—and student English language proficiency outcomes has received insufficient empirical attention in quantitative research designs (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Hattie, 2008). Understanding these relationships is essential for developing evidence-based policy recommendations and targeted interventions to enhance language instruction quality.

### 1.3. Research Objectives

This comprehensive quantitative study aimed to:

1. Establish baseline English language proficiency levels across multiple skill dimensions in secondary students (Grades 9-11)
2. Identify developmental trajectories and significant differences in ELP by grade level, gender, and sociocultural variables
3. Analyse relationships among constituent language skill components and overall proficiency
4. Examine pedagogical determinants of language proficiency including teacher qualification, instructional quality, and resource availability
5. Develop predictive models identifying key factors influencing language proficiency variation
6. Provide evidence-based recommendations for language teaching improvement within diverse sociocultural contexts

### 1.4. Research Questions

RQ1: How do English language proficiency levels differ across secondary grade levels (9, 10, 11) across multiple skill dimensions?

RQ2: What are the relationships among vocabulary, grammar, listening, speaking, reading, and writing components as measured indicators of overall English proficiency?

RQ3: Which pedagogical factors (teacher qualification, instructional methodology, resource availability) and student variables (gender, SES, prior achievement) significantly predict English language proficiency outcomes?

RQ4: Are there meaningful interactions between grade level and pedagogical/student variables in predicting proficiency outcomes?

RQ5: How do sociocultural contexts and medium

of instruction mediate the relationships between pedagogical variables and language proficiency?

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1. Theoretical Frameworks of Language Proficiency

Contemporary conceptualizations of language proficiency draw upon multiple theoretical traditions emphasizing the multidimensional, dynamic nature of communicative competence. Bachman and Palmer's (1996) influential framework distinguishes language competence (grammatical, textual, illocutionary, sociolinguistic knowledge) from strategic competence (cognitive processes enabling language use), emphasizing that proficiency represents integration of linguistic knowledge with contextual appropriateness and strategic deployment.

Canale and Swain's (1980) foundational communicative competence model identifies four components: grammatical competence (linguistic system knowledge), sociolinguistic competence (appropriateness in social contexts), discourse competence (coherence and cohesion in extended discourse), and strategic competence (communication strategies enabling interaction). This framework established that language proficiency extends beyond grammatical accuracy to encompass functional communication ability.

Cummins' (2000) distinction between basic interpersonal communicative skills (BICS) and cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP) proves particularly relevant for secondary education contexts where students must demonstrate academic language competence for disciplinary learning across subject areas. CALP development involves sophisticated vocabulary, complex syntactic structures, and discipline-specific discourse patterns requisite for academic success.

Krashen's (1981) influential acquisition-learning hypothesis and comprehensible input theory propose that language acquisition occurs through meaningful input slightly beyond current proficiency levels, with affect playing crucial moderating roles. This framework emphasizes the importance of motivating pedagogical contexts and reduced anxiety environments—factors increasingly recognized as important for secondary language learning.

Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory provides complementary theoretical grounding, emphasizing that language learning occurs through social interaction and scaffolded assistance from more

capable others. Within educational contexts, teacher expertise, quality feedback, and appropriately structured language tasks enable learner progression through the zone of proximal development (ZPD).

### 2.2. English Language Proficiency Components

#### 2.2.1. Vocabulary Knowledge

Vocabulary comprises an essential foundation for language proficiency across all dimensions. Nation and Newton (2009) distinguish vocabulary breadth (number of words known) from depth (knowledge of word meanings, collocations, and register variation). Research consistently demonstrates that vocabulary knowledge predicts academic achievement, reading comprehension, and communication effectiveness (Stahl & Fairbanks, 1986).

Schmitt (2008) identifies receptive vocabulary (recognition and comprehension) and productive vocabulary (accurate usage in speaking and writing) as distinct competencies with different acquisition trajectories and proficiency implications. Academic vocabulary, extending beyond high-frequency words, proves critical for secondary students navigating discipline-specific discourse (Coxhead, 2000).

#### 2.2.2. Grammatical Competence

Grammar refers to systematic knowledge of linguistic structures enabling correct sentence construction and comprehension. While grammatical accuracy alone does not ensure communication effectiveness, basic grammatical competence provides essential scaffolding for intelligible communication (Ellis, 2006). Secondary students require increasingly sophisticated grammatical structures—complex clauses, passive constructions, conditional expressions—commensurate with academic discourse demands.

Larsen-Freeman (2003) emphasizes that grammar proficiency involves accuracy (correctness), fluency (production speed), and appropriateness (contextual fit), suggesting that teaching approaches should integrate form, meaning, and use rather than emphasizing mechanics isolation.

#### 2.2.3. Listening Comprehension

Listening comprehension, while often neglected in assessment contexts, represents a crucial skill enabling academic learning across subjects and social communication. Rost (2011) distinguishes comprehending discrete words and phrases (micro-level processing) from understanding broader discourse organization, speaker intent, and implied meanings (macro-level processing). Second language

listening presents particular challenges due to processing speed, accent variation, unknown vocabulary, and cognitive load effects.

#### **2.2.4. Speaking Fluency**

Oral communication fluency encompasses accuracy, coherence, vocabulary range, and pragmatic appropriateness. For secondary students, speaking proficiency increasingly requires academic register and disciplinary discourse competence alongside social communication ability. Tavakoli and Skehan (2005) distinguish between fluency (speech rate and smoothness), accuracy (grammatical correctness), and complexity (syntactic and lexical sophistication) as interrelated but distinguishable aspects of oral proficiency.

#### **2.2.5. Reading Comprehension**

Reading comprehension involves word recognition, sentence parsing, discourse-level comprehension, and integration with background knowledge. Academic reading at secondary levels demands increasingly sophisticated strategies for managing subject-specific vocabulary, complex sentence structures, implicit meanings, and longer texts with dense information (Perfetti & Hart, 2002).

#### **2.2.6. Writing Accuracy**

Written expression requires coordination of orthography, morphosyntax, vocabulary selection, discourse organization, and pragmatic appropriateness. Secondary level writing frequently demands formal register, complex structures, and organization patterns increasingly distant from oral communication norms (Grabe & Kaplan, 1996).

### **2.3. Pedagogical Determinants of Language Proficiency**

#### **2.3.1 Teacher Qualification and Expertise**

Teacher qualification and subject matter expertise constitute among the most significant predictors of student language outcomes (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Hattie, 2008). Teachers with formal language education training, advanced proficiency levels, and contemporary pedagogical knowledge facilitate superior student learning compared to teachers lacking such preparation (Freeman & Johnson, 1998).

Pedagogical content knowledge—understanding of how to effectively teach specific language concepts, common learner difficulties, and evidence-based instructional strategies—proves particularly influential (Shulman, 1987). Teacher self-efficacy regarding language instruction ability also predicts

classroom practice quality and student achievement (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001).

#### **2.3.2. Instructional Methodology and Practice**

Contemporary language teaching emphasizes communicative language teaching (CLT) principles prioritizing meaningful communication, student interaction, and authentic language use over isolated mechanics instruction (Brown, 2007). Task-based language teaching (TBLT) provides structured frameworks for organizing instruction around meaningful tasks requiring language output (Nunan, 2004).

Explicit grammar instruction integrated within communicative contexts proves more effective than either grammar isolation or complete grammar absence (Ellis, 2002). Balanced approaches integrating form-focused and meaning-focused activities facilitate both accuracy and fluency development (Littlewood, 2004).

#### **2.3.3. Classroom Resources and Technology**

Instructional resource availability—including textbooks, audio-visual materials, computers, internet access—creates differential opportunities for exposure to authentic language and varied input (Warschauer & Healey, 2000). Technology integration, particularly when supporting communicative interaction and authentic input exposure, demonstrates positive effects on language outcomes (Chapelle, 2003).

### **2.4. Sociocultural Factors and Language Learning**

#### **2.4.1. Gender Differences**

Research on gender differences in language learning demonstrates complex, context-dependent patterns. While some studies report female advantage in language achievement, particularly on writing assessments, effect sizes typically remain small and are substantially mediated by motivational, instructional, and contextual factors (Lietz, 2006). Norton and Pavlenko (2004) emphasize the importance of examining how gender intersects with language learning identity, motivation, and classroom participation patterns.

#### **2.4.2. Socioeconomic Status**

Socioeconomic status influences language proficiency development through multiple mechanisms including parental educational attainment, home literacy practices, access to educational resources, school quality variation, and

tutoring/supplementary instruction (Lareau, 2011). Cumulative disadvantage effects may emerge whereby SES-related resource differences compound across educational trajectories (Stanovich, 1986).

### 2.4.3. Medium of Instruction

Medium of instruction—whether English, regional language, or bilingual approaches—substantially influences proficiency development (Bialystok, 2001). Students receiving English-medium instruction from early grades typically demonstrate superior English proficiency compared to those transitioning to English at secondary levels. However, quality of instruction and learner motivation may substantially mediate medium effects (Cummins, 2000).

### 2.5. Language Proficiency Development across Secondary Grades

Developmental progressions across secondary education involve increasingly sophisticated linguistic demands reflecting both cognitive maturation and academic curriculum requirements. Students transition from basic communicative language use toward academic language proficiency, discipline-specific vocabulary, complex syntactic structures, and advanced discourse competence (Scarcella, 2003).

Prior achievement represents a strong predictor of subsequent proficiency development, suggesting cumulative effects whereby early language difficulties compound over time without effective intervention (Snow *et al.*, 1998).

### 2.6. Research Gaps and Study Justification

Despite recognition of English language proficiency's educational importance, empirical research examining multidimensional proficiency, pedagogical determinants, and sociocultural mediators within Indian secondary contexts remains limited. This study addresses identified gaps by conducting comprehensive quantitative analysis of proficiency components, pedagogical influences, and sociocultural factors using validated instruments and rigorous statistical methods.

## 3. METHODOLOGY

### 3.1. Research Design

This study employed a cross-sectional quantitative research design examining English language proficiency and associated variables at a single temporal point. Cross-sectional designs enable efficient data collection and between-group

comparisons, though they preclude direct causal inference regarding developmental change trajectories.

### 3.2. Population and Sample

The target population comprised secondary school students (Grades 9-11) enrolled in diverse educational institutions (government schools, private schools, semi-government schools) located throughout Chennai metropolitan area, India.

The research sample consisted of N = 345 students (Grade 9: n = 115; Grade 10: n = 113; Grade 11: n = 117) representing diverse socioeconomic backgrounds, linguistic backgrounds, prior achievement levels, and educational experiences.

Sample inclusion criteria:

Current enrollment in Grade 9, 10, or 11

Minimum 12 months prior English instruction

English designated as academic subject

No documented language disorders affecting assessment validity

Written informed consent from parents/guardians and student assent

Sample exclusion criteria:

Recently arrived international students with <12 months India residence

Students with documented cognitive disabilities affecting assessment validity

Students absent during assessment periods

Sample demographic characteristics are presented in Table 1.

### 3.3. Measurement Instruments and Variables

#### 3.3.1. English Language Proficiency Assessment

Overall English language proficiency was assessed using a comprehensive language proficiency battery comprising standardized instruments measuring component skills:

Vocabulary Assessment: 30-item vocabulary test measuring receptive vocabulary across academic and general domains using multiple-choice format with 4 options per item (score range: 0-30).

Grammar Assessment: 25-item grammar competence test measuring accuracy in sentence construction, morphosyntax, and complex structures using multiple-choice and error-identification formats (score range: 0-25).

Listening Comprehension: 20-item listening test with audio-recorded passages followed by comprehension questions in multiple-choice format (score range: 0-20).

Speaking Fluency: Oral interview rated by trained assessors on 7-point scale measuring fluency, accuracy, and appropriateness across prepared and

spontaneous speech samples (score range: 0-35).

Reading Comprehension: 20-item reading assessment with passages followed by comprehension questions measuring literal and inferential understanding (score range: 0-20).

Writing Accuracy: Scored written sample (150-200 words) evaluated using analytic rubric assessing vocabulary range, grammar accuracy, discourse organization, and appropriateness (score range: 0-30).

Overall ELP Score: Composite measure combining standardized component scores (total range: 0-160, normalized to 0-100 scale).

Inter-rater reliability coefficients (Cronbach's  $\alpha$ ) for component measures ranged from .74 to .89, demonstrating adequate internal consistency. Test-retest reliability over 2-week interval:  $r = .78$  to  $.86$ , indicating measurement stability.

### 3.3.2. Pedagogical Variables

Teacher Qualification: Categorical (Bachelor's degree only, Bachelor's + PGCE/B.Ed., Master's degree or higher)

Instructional Resources: Continuous scale (0-20 points) measuring availability of textbooks, audio-visual materials, computers, internet access, authentic materials

Teaching Methodology: Categorical based on classroom observation protocols (Traditional grammar-focused, Modified communicative, Communicative task-based)

Class Size: Continuous (number of students per class)

Instructional Hours: Continuous (hours per week dedicated to English instruction)

### 3.3.3. Student Variables

Grade Level: Categorical (9, 10, 11)

Gender: Categorical (Male, Female)

Socioeconomic Status: Categorical (Low, Middle, High) based on parental occupation and income indicators

Medium of Instruction: Categorical (English medium from Grade 1, Bilingual transition at Grade 6, Regional medium with English as subject only)

Prior English Achievement: Continuous (previous year final English grade; 0-100 scale)

Age: Continuous (years)

Out-of-school English Exposure: Continuous scale (0-10) measuring informal English use through media, technology, social settings

### 3.4. Data Collection Procedures

Data collection occurred during regular school

year following institutional approval and informed consent procedures. Trained assessment administrators administered all language proficiency measures in standardized conditions. Individual students completed written assessments (vocabulary, grammar, reading) in 90-minute sessions. Listening assessments occurred in group administration. Speaking assessments were conducted individually with trained raters. Writing assessments were completed under timed conditions.

Pedagogical variables were collected through teacher questionnaires, school administrative records, and classroom observation protocols completed by trained observers. Student demographic variables were collected through student questionnaires and school records.

All assessments adhered to standardized administration protocols ensuring consistency across sites. Assessment security procedures prevented contamination across assessment forms. Assessor training included 8-hour intensive sessions addressing assessment protocols, scoring procedures, and quality assurance.

### 3.5. Statistical Analysis Procedures

#### 3.5.1. Descriptive Statistics

Means, standard deviations, ranges, and frequency distributions were calculated for all variables disaggregated by grade level, gender, and SES.

#### 3.5.2. Parametric Inferential Tests

One-way ANOVA examined grade-level differences in overall ELP scores and component scores. Multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) examined grade-level effects across multiple skill components simultaneously.

Independent samples t-tests compared ELP outcomes by gender and medium of instruction.

Pearson product-moment correlations examined relationships among component skills and between component skills and overall proficiency.

#### 3.5.3. Multiple Linear Regression

Hierarchical regression analysis examined relative contributions of student variables (Block 1), pedagogical variables (Block 2), and interaction terms (Block 3) to ELP variance. Standardized regression coefficients ( $\beta$ ) are reported with associated t-statistics and significance levels.

#### 3.5.4. Effect Sizes and Practical Significance

Cohen's  $d$  effect sizes were calculated for

between-group comparisons using pooled standard deviations. Interpretation guidelines:  $d = 0.2$  (small),  $0.5$  (medium),  $0.8$  (large). Eta-squared ( $\eta^2$ ) and partial eta-squared ( $\eta_p^2$ ) effect sizes are reported for ANOVA results.

### 3.5.5. Assumptions Testing

ANOVA assumptions (normality, homogeneity of variance) were examined using Shapiro-Wilk tests and Levene's tests. Correlational assumptions (linearity, absence of multicollinearity) were assessed through scatter plot inspection and variance inflation factor (VIF) calculations. Regression model assumptions (linearity, homoscedasticity, normality of residuals, independence of errors) were verified through residual plot examination and Durbin-Watson statistics.

## 4. RESULTS

### 4.1. Sample Characteristics and Descriptive

### Statistics

Table 1 presents comprehensive sample demographic characteristics and descriptive statistics for all measured variables. The sample comprised 345 students with balanced representation across grades (Grade 9: 33.3%, Grade 10: 32.8%, Grade 11: 33.9%). Gender distribution was relatively balanced (47.5% Male, 52.5% Female). Regarding English medium instruction, 58.3% received English medium from Grade 1, 26.1% from Grade 6 transition, and 15.7% English as subject only. Socioeconomic representation reflected urban diversity: 28.4% Low, 52.2% Middle, 19.4% High SES.

Overall English language proficiency demonstrated  $M = 62.89$  ( $SD = 15.34$ ), with substantial variability ranging from 18 to 98 (on 0-100 scale). Component skill means ranged from 13.24 ( $SD = 4.67$ ) for writing accuracy to 19.45 ( $SD = 4.23$ ) for grammar components.

**Table 1: Sample Demographics And Overall English Language Proficiency Descriptive Statistics.**

| Variable                       | N   | M     | SD    | Min | Max | %    |
|--------------------------------|-----|-------|-------|-----|-----|------|
| Overall ELP Score              | 345 | 62.89 | 15.34 | 18  | 98  | —    |
| By Grade                       |     |       |       |     |     |      |
| Grade 9                        | 115 | 54.23 | 13.42 | 22  | 89  | 33.3 |
| Grade 10                       | 113 | 61.45 | 14.78 | 19  | 94  | 32.8 |
| Grade 11                       | 117 | 72.45 | 9.87  | 42  | 98  | 33.9 |
| By Gender                      |     |       |       |     |     |      |
| Male                           | 164 | 62.34 | 15.89 | 18  | 96  | 47.5 |
| Female                         | 181 | 63.42 | 14.92 | 21  | 98  | 52.5 |
| By SES                         |     |       |       |     |     |      |
| Low                            | 98  | 58.12 | 16.45 | 18  | 87  | 28.4 |
| Middle                         | 180 | 63.45 | 14.67 | 19  | 95  | 52.2 |
| High                           | 67  | 68.34 | 12.89 | 34  | 98  | 19.4 |
| By Medium                      |     |       |       |     |     |      |
| English Medium (Grade 1)       | 201 | 66.23 | 13.45 | 28  | 98  | 58.3 |
| Bilingual (Grade 6 transition) | 90  | 61.12 | 15.67 | 19  | 89  | 26.1 |
| English Subject Only           | 54  | 52.34 | 14.23 | 18  | 81  | 15.7 |
| Component Skills               |     |       |       |     |     |      |
| Vocabulary                     | 345 | 17.89 | 3.45  | 5   | 30  | —    |
| Grammar                        | 345 | 19.45 | 4.23  | 4   | 25  | —    |
| Listening                      | 345 | 14.67 | 4.56  | 2   | 20  | —    |
| Speaking                       | 345 | 22.34 | 5.78  | 6   | 35  | —    |
| Reading                        | 345 | 16.23 | 3.89  | 4   | 20  | —    |
| Writing                        | 345 | 13.24 | 4.67  | 2   | 30  | —    |

#### 4.2. Grade-Level Differences in Overall ELP

One-way between-groups ANOVA examined whether grade level significantly predicted overall English language proficiency scores. Results revealed highly significant main effect of grade level on ELP:

$$F(2,342) = 48.67, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .221$$

This large effect size indicates grade level accounts for 22.1% of overall ELP variance. Clear developmental progression emerged: Grade 9 students ( $M = 54.23$ ,  $SD = 13.42$ ) demonstrated substantially lower proficiency compared to Grade 10 students ( $M = 61.45$ ,  $SD = 14.78$ ) and Grade 11 students ( $M = 72.45$ ,  $SD = 9.87$ ). Mean differences between grades are substantial (7.22 points Grade 9-10; 10.99 points Grade 10-11; 18.21 points Grade 9-11).

**Table 2: English Language Proficiency By Grade Level.**

| Variable    | Grade 9          | Grade 10         | Grade 11        | F     | p     | $\eta_p^2$ |
|-------------|------------------|------------------|-----------------|-------|-------|------------|
| Overall ELP | 54.23<br>(13.42) | 61.45<br>(14.78) | 72.45<br>(9.87) | 48.67 | <.001 | .221       |

**Table 3: Effect Sizes (Cohen's D) For Grade-Level Comparisons.**

| Comparison           | Cohen's d | Interpretation | 95% CI       |
|----------------------|-----------|----------------|--------------|
| Grade 9 vs Grade 10  | 0.51      | Medium         | [0.24, 0.78] |
| Grade 9 vs Grade 11  | 1.34      | Large          | [1.06, 1.62] |
| Grade 10 vs Grade 11 | 0.78      | Medium-Large   | [0.50, 1.06] |

#### 4.3 Multivariate Analysis of Variance: Component Skills

Multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) examined grade-level effects across multiple language skill components simultaneously. Multivariate F-statistic (Wilks' Lambda) was highly significant:

$$\text{Wilks' } \Lambda = .612, F(12,670) = 17.89, p < .001$$

Univariate ANOVA tests for each component skill (reported in Table 2) revealed significant grade-level effects for all component skills: vocabulary  $F(2,342) = 35.45$ ,  $p < .001$ ; grammar  $F(2,342) = 28.34$ ,  $p < .001$ ; listening  $F(2,342) = 31.78$ ,  $p < .001$ ; speaking  $F(2,342) = 42.12$ ,  $p < .001$ ; reading  $F(2,342) = 38.23$ ,  $p < .001$ ; writing  $F(2,342) = 25.67$ ,  $p < .001$ .

Partial eta-squared effect sizes for component skills ranged from .130 (writing) to .197 (speaking), indicating that grade level explains substantial proportions of variance in all skill dimensions but differentially across components.

|            |                 |                 |                 |       |       |      |
|------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-------|-------|------|
| Vocabulary | 15.67<br>(3.23) | 17.89<br>(3.45) | 20.12<br>(2.89) | 35.45 | <.001 | .171 |
| Grammar    | 17.34<br>(4.56) | 19.78<br>(3.89) | 21.34<br>(3.12) | 28.34 | <.001 | .142 |
| Listening  | 12.45<br>(4.67) | 14.56<br>(4.34) | 17.23<br>(3.89) | 31.78 | <.001 | .157 |
| Speaking   | 19.23<br>(6.12) | 22.67<br>(5.45) | 26.34<br>(4.23) | 42.12 | <.001 | .197 |
| Reading    | 14.34<br>(4.12) | 16.45<br>(3.67) | 18.67<br>(2.89) | 38.23 | <.001 | .182 |
| Writing    | 11.12<br>(4.45) | 13.23<br>(4.67) | 15.89<br>(4.12) | 25.67 | <.001 | .130 |

*Note:  $p < .001$ ; Values in parentheses are standard deviations*

Post-hoc Tukey HSD comparisons indicated all pairwise grade-level comparisons were statistically significant (all  $p < .001$ ). Effect sizes for pairwise comparisons are presented in Table 3.

#### 4.4. Gender Differences in Language Proficiency

Independent samples t-test compared overall ELP between male ( $n = 164$ ,  $M = 62.34$ ,  $SD = 15.89$ ) and female ( $n = 181$ ,  $M = 63.42$ ,  $SD = 14.92$ ) students:

$$t(343) = -0.58, p = .560$$

Gender difference was not statistically significant. Effect size was negligible:

$$\text{Cohen's } d = 0.08 \text{ (95\% CI: [-0.18, 0.34])}$$

This minimal effect size indicates virtually no practical gender difference in overall English language proficiency. Component skill analyses revealed similarly negligible gender differences across vocabulary, grammar, listening, reading (all  $p > .05$ ). However, slight female advantage emerged for writing ( $M_{\text{female}} = 13.67$  vs  $M_{\text{male}} = 12.78$ ,  $t(343) = 1.89$ ,  $p = .060$ ,  $d = 0.19$ ), approaching but not reaching conventional statistical significance.

#### 4.5 Socioeconomic Status and Medium of Instruction Effects

One-way ANOVA examined ELP differences by SES:

$F(2,342) = 12.34, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .067$

Post-hoc Tukey tests revealed significant differences between Low SES ( $M = 58.12, SD = 16.45$ ) and Middle SES ( $M = 63.45, SD = 14.67$ ), and between Low and High SES ( $M = 68.34, SD = 12.89$ ). Middle and High SES groups did not differ significantly. Effect sizes: Low vs Middle  $d = 0.33$  (small); Low vs High  $d = 0.65$  (medium); Middle vs High  $d = 0.33$  (small).

Analysis of English medium instruction revealed significant differences:

$F(2,342) = 28.45, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .143$

Post-hoc tests: Early English medium ( $M = 66.23, SD = 13.45$ ) significantly exceeded both Grade 6 transition ( $M = 61.12, SD = 15.67, d = 0.34$ ) and English-as-subject-only groups ( $M = 52.34, SD = 14.23, d = 0.93$ , large effect).

#### 4.6. Correlational Analysis: Language Component Skills

Pearson correlations examined relationships among language component skills and with overall proficiency. All correlations were positive and significant (Table 4).

**Table 4: Pearson Correlations Among Language Component Skills.**

|            | Vocab | Gram | Listen | Speak | Read | Write | Overall |
|------------|-------|------|--------|-------|------|-------|---------|
| Vocabulary | —     | .634 | .456   | .512  | .678 | .423  | .723    |
| Grammar    |       | —    | .389   | .467  | .534 | .512  | .701    |
| Listening  |       |      | —      | .445  | .423 | .356  | .612    |
| Speaking   |       |      |        | —     | .467 | .489  | .689    |
| Reading    |       |      |        |       | —    | .478  | .712    |
| Writing    |       |      |        |       |      | —     | .656    |

Note:  $p < .001, p < .01$

Strongest correlations: Vocabulary-Reading ( $r = .678$ ), Vocabulary-Overall ( $r = .723$ ), Reading-Overall ( $r = .712$ ). Weakest correlations: Listening-Writing ( $r = .356$ ), Listening-Grammar ( $r = .389$ ). Component intercorrelations suggest distinct but related skill dimensions, with vocabulary and reading showing particularly strong relationships.

#### 4.7. Pedagogical Variables and Language

**Table 6: Regression Coefficients For Final Hierarchical Model.**

| Predictor         | B     | SE(B) | $\beta$ | t    | p     | VIF  |
|-------------------|-------|-------|---------|------|-------|------|
| (Constant)        | 22.34 | 4.56  | —       | 4.90 | <.001 | —    |
| Grade Level       | 7.24  | 0.89  | .421    | 8.13 | <.001 | 2.12 |
| Gender (Female)   | 0.89  | 0.78  | .056    | 1.14 | .256  | 1.04 |
| Prior Achievement | 0.34  | 0.07  | .289    | 4.87 | <.001 | 2.34 |

#### Proficiency

Analysis examined relationships between pedagogical variables and ELP outcomes. Teacher qualification showed significant association with student proficiency:

$F(2,342) = 9.78, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .054$

Students taught by Bachelor's + PGCE/B.Ed. teachers ( $M = 64.56, SD = 14.23$ ) demonstrated higher proficiency than those taught by Bachelor's-only teachers ( $M = 59.34, SD = 16.12, d = 0.35$ ). Master's degree teachers' students ( $M = 67.89, SD = 12.45$ ) exceeded both lower qualification groups (vs Bachelor's:  $d = 0.57$ ; vs Bachelor's + PGCE:  $d = 0.26$ ).

Instructional resources availability (measured 0-20 scale) correlated positively with overall proficiency:  $r = .445, p < .001$ . Classroom size showed negative correlation:  $r = -.312, p < .001$ . Instructional hours (English per week) correlated positively:  $r = .378, p < .001$ .

Teaching methodology comparison revealed differences:

$F(2,342) = 15.67, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .084$

Communicative task-based approach students ( $M = 67.23, SD = 13.12$ ) exceeded modified communicative ( $M = 62.56, SD = 14.45, d = 0.35$ ) and traditional grammar-focused ( $M = 56.78, SD = 16.34, d = 0.66$ , medium effect) groups.

#### 4.8 Multiple Linear Regression: Predictive Model

Hierarchical regression examined relative contributions of student variables (Block 1), pedagogical variables (Block 2), and pedagogical  $\times$  grade interactions (Block 3) to overall ELP variance. Results appear in Table 5.

**Table 5: Hierarchical Regression Model Summary.**

| Model                       | R    | R <sup>2</sup> | $\Delta R^2$ | F     | p     |
|-----------------------------|------|----------------|--------------|-------|-------|
| Block 1 (Student variables) | .523 | .273           | .273         | 21.45 | <.001 |
| Block 2 (+ Pedagogical)     | .587 | .344           | .071         | 18.89 | <.001 |
| Block 3 (+ Interactions)    | .601 | .361           | .017         | 14.23 | <.001 |

Final Model (Block 3):  $R^2 = .361, RMSE = 9.34$ .

|                               |       |      |       |       |       |      |
|-------------------------------|-------|------|-------|-------|-------|------|
| SES (Middle)                  | 2.12  | 1.23 | .107  | 1.72  | .086  | 1.89 |
| SES (High)                    | 4.23  | 1.34 | .189  | 3.16  | .002  | 1.76 |
| Medium: Grade 6 Trans.        | -3.45 | 1.67 | -.117 | -2.07 | .039  | 1.56 |
| Medium: Subject Only          | -7.12 | 2.01 | -.192 | -3.54 | <.001 | 1.43 |
| Teacher Qualification         | 2.18  | 0.87 | .134  | 2.51  | .012  | 1.67 |
| Instructional Resources       | 1.89  | 0.78 | .142  | 2.42  | .016  | 1.54 |
| Class Size (-.15 per student) | -0.45 | 0.23 | -.101 | -1.96 | .051  | 1.44 |
| Instructional Hours           | 0.67  | 0.34 | .096  | 1.97  | .050  | 1.38 |
| Grade × Resources             | 0.34  | 0.18 | .089  | 1.89  | .060  | 1.78 |

Note:  $p < .001$ ,  $p < .01$ ,  $p < .05$ ; VIF = Variance Inflation Factor (all < 2.5, indicating no multicollinearity).

### Key Findings:

Grade level emerged as strongest predictor ( $\beta = .421$ ,  $t = 8.13$ ,  $p < .001$ ), with each grade level increase associated with 7.24-point ELP increase. Prior achievement ( $\beta = .289$ ,  $t = 4.87$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and high SES ( $\beta = .189$ ,  $t = 3.16$ ,  $p = .002$ ) also significantly predicted proficiency. Medium of instruction effects: Grade 6 transition reduced proficiency by 3.45 points ( $p = .039$ ); English-subject-only reduced by 7.12 points ( $p < .001$ ) compared to early English medium.

Teacher qualification ( $\beta = .134$ ,  $p = .012$ ) and instructional resources ( $\beta = .142$ ,  $p = .016$ ) significantly predicted outcomes. Gender showed negligible effect ( $\beta = .056$ ,  $p = .256$ ).

Final model accounted for 36.1% of ELP variance ( $R^2 = .361$ ), with grade × resources interaction approaching significance ( $p = .060$ ), suggesting pedagogical resources may have differential effects across grade levels.

### 4.9. Interaction Effects: Pedagogical Quality by Grade

Analysis examined whether pedagogical quality effects varied across grades. Simple slopes analysis indicated that instructional resources effects were stronger in higher grades. For Grade 9:  $b = 0.87$ ,  $t = 1.45$ ,  $p = .148$  (NS); Grade 10:  $b = 1.56$ ,  $t = 2.23$ ,  $p = .027$  (S); Grade 11:  $b = 2.01$ ,  $t = 2.78$ ,  $p = .006$  (S). This pattern suggests upper grades may more fully capitalize on enhanced resources.

## 5. DISCUSSION

### 5.1 Grade-Level Developmental Progression

Results demonstrate robust developmental progression in English language proficiency across secondary grades, with Grade 11 students showing substantially higher proficiency than Grade 9 ( $d = 1.34$ , large effect). This finding aligns with extensive developmental literature documenting skill advancement across secondary education (Scarcella,

2003). The 22.1% variance explained by grade level constitutes a substantial effect size in educational research, validating that secondary instruction produces measurable proficiency improvements.

Notably, proficiency progression is not uniform – the Grade 10-11 advancement (10.99 points) exceeds Grade 9-10 improvement (7.22 points). This nonlinear pattern may reflect: (1) increased cognitive maturation facilitating advanced linguistic processing; (2) cumulative language exposure effects becoming pronounced; (3) curriculum intensification in higher grades; or (4) student motivation and investment increases as examination importance looms.

Speaking component demonstrated largest grade effects ( $\eta_p^2 = .197$ ), suggesting oral communication skills develop most substantially across grades, potentially reflecting increased classroom interaction, peer communication, and confidence development as students' progress.

### 5.2. Component Skills Interrelationships

Moderate to strong correlations among language components ( $r = .356$  to  $.678$ ) suggest these represent distinct yet interconnected skill dimensions rather than a single monolithic construct. Strongest vocabulary-reading correlation ( $r = .678$ ) aligns with theoretical expectations – reading comprehension depends heavily on vocabulary knowledge, and extensive reading expands vocabulary repertoires. Weakest listening-writing correlation ( $r = .356$ ) reflects potentially distinct cognitive demands and instructional emphases.

Variance partitioning suggests approximately 20-46% of component variance is unique (non-overlapping), indicating each component contributes uniquely to overall proficiency. This supports component-specific instruction targeting individual skill development rather than undifferentiated "English" instruction.

### 5.3. Gender Equity Findings

Negligible gender differences ( $d = 0.08$ ) align with contemporary research demonstrating gender parity in language learning across diverse contexts, particularly when instructional quality is equitable (Lietz, 2006). This finding is pedagogically encouraging, suggesting deliberate instructional design can achieve gender-equitable outcomes. Slight non-significant female writing advantage ( $d = 0.19$ ) aligns with some international literature but remains below conventional significance thresholds.

### 5.4. Sociocultural Influences: SES and Medium of Instruction

Socioeconomic status demonstrated significant effects ( $R^2 = .067$ ), with Low-SES students underperforming Middle and High-SES peers by approximately 5-10 points. This pattern likely reflects: (1) differential access to educational resources; (2) parental educational background influence on home language practices; (3) school quality variation by SES neighborhood; (4) tutoring/supplementary instruction disparities. The attenuated Middle-High difference suggests threshold effects whereby resource sufficiency emerges at middle-class income levels.

Medium of instruction effects ( $R^2 = .143$ ) revealed substantial differences, with early English medium instruction students substantially outperforming bilingual transition ( $d = 0.34$ ) and English-subject-only ( $d = 0.93$ , large effect) groups. This robust finding reflects cumulative exposure advantages – students receiving English-medium instruction throughout secondary experience substantially greater English language input across subjects. Conversely, students encountering English primarily through subject instruction face abbreviated exposure and potential transfer difficulties between subject-specific and academic English.

However, interaction patterns suggest quality of instruction mediates medium effects; well-resourced, expertly-taught programs may partially compensate for later English introduction.

### 5.5. Pedagogical Quality as Proficiency Predictor

Teacher qualification, instructional resources, teaching methodology, and instructional hours each significantly predicted ELP outcomes, collectively indicating pedagogical quality substantially influences proficiency development. Teacher qualification effects ( $\beta = .134$ ,  $R^2$  contribution  $\approx .018$ ) align with research demonstrating teacher expertise

importance (Darling-Hammond, 2000). Master's degree holders achieved student outcomes approximately 8-9 points higher than Bachelor's-only teachers, suggesting advanced subject matter knowledge and pedagogical sophistication produce measurable benefits.

Instructional resources availability ( $\beta = .142$ ) significantly predicted proficiency, supporting technology integration and materials-based instruction importance. Class size negative effects ( $r = -.312$ ) suggest smaller classes enabling greater individual attention and interactive practice – particularly important for communicative language teaching emphasizing student participation.

Teaching methodology differences revealed communicative task-based approaches yielding 10-11 point advantages over traditional grammar-focused instruction, supporting CLT principles (Brown, 2007). This 0.66-0.84 point difference ( $d \approx 0.66$ ) represents educationally meaningful improvement potentially achievable through instructional methodology enhancement without requiring resource intensification.

### 5.6. Predictive Model and Explained Variance

Hierarchical regression identified grade level as dominant predictor ( $\beta = .421$ ), followed by prior achievement ( $\beta = .289$ ) and high SES ( $\beta = .189$ ). Collectively, the final model explained 36.1% of ELP variance – substantially higher than grade level alone (22.1%), indicating that student characteristics and pedagogical variables meaningfully contribute beyond developmental factors alone. The 63.9% unexplained variance suggests additional important variables warrant investigation: (1) student motivation, language learning anxiety, and self-efficacy; (2) home language practices and parental English proficiency; (3) out-of-school English exposure through media and technology; (4) teacher self-efficacy and pedagogical beliefs; (5) peer interaction quality and cooperative learning climates; (6) student background linguistic diversity effects.

### 5.7. Pedagogical Implications

#### 5.7.1. Grade-Appropriate, Developmentally Sequenced Instruction

Substantial grade-level differences indicate instruction must be carefully sequenced and developmentally appropriate. Grade 9 instruction should emphasize foundational vocabulary, basic grammar structures, and comprehensible input. Grade 10 should introduce greater complexity, academic language, and authentic materials. Grade 11 should emphasize sophisticated discourse,

discipline-specific vocabulary, and advanced production skills.

### 5.7.2. *Component-Integrated Instruction*

Given distinct yet interrelated component skills, effective instruction integrates rather than isolates skills. Rather than separate "grammar" and "speaking" lessons, instruction should embed grammar within meaningful communicative contexts, simultaneously developing accuracy and fluency.

### 5.7.3. *Teacher Development Priority*

Teacher qualification significantly predicts student outcomes, suggesting investments in teacher preparation, advanced degree support, professional development, and pedagogical training constitute high-leverage interventions for proficiency improvement. Particular attention should address communicative methodology implementation, authentic material utilization, and technology integration.

### 5.7.4. *Resource Equity and Equitable Access*

Instructional resource availability significantly predicts proficiency, particularly in upper grades. Resource equity initiatives ensuring all students access textbooks, audio-visual materials, technology, and authentic English input would likely reduce achievement disparities. Creative resource development and sharing arrangements may address resource constraints in under-resourced institutions.

### 5.7.5. *Medium of Instruction Considerations*

The substantial English-subject-only disadvantage ( $d = 0.93$ ) suggests serious consideration of medium of instruction choices. If early English introduction is not feasible, alternative approaches—bilingual instruction with increased English content, English-medium specializations in select subjects, intensive English programs—might partially compensate for late introduction.

#### 5.7.6 Sociocultural Context Recognition

Contextual variability in proficiency development necessitates responsive, culturally sustaining pedagogy acknowledging diverse student backgrounds. Curriculum should incorporate culturally relevant materials, acknowledge multilingualism as asset rather than deficit, and recognize diverse language practices students bring to classrooms.

## 5.8. *Study Limitations*

- Cross-sectional design precludes causal inference about longitudinal development; experimental or longitudinal quasi-experimental designs would strengthen causal claims
- Geographic limitation to Chennai may limit generalizability to rural contexts or other Indian regions with different linguistic ecologies and institutional resources
- Self-reported behavioral variables (out-of-school English exposure) lack precision; objective measurement would enhance validity
- Unmeasured variables potentially important for proficiency development were not examined: motivation, anxiety, self-efficacy, parental involvement, home language practices, language learning strategy use, identity factors
- Assessor effects in speaking assessment introduce potential rater bias despite training; inter-rater reliability monitoring could strengthen assessment validity
- School selection may reflect non-random sampling bias if schools differed systematically from non-participating institutions
- Simplified proficiency measurement using component tests may not capture integrated discourse-level competence or pragmatic appropriateness

## 5.9. *Implications for Language Teaching Research Paradigms*

Findings suggest evolution in language teaching research toward integrated paradigms examining: (1) component skills development within holistic proficiency frameworks; (2) pedagogical quality influences on proficiency trajectories; (3) sociocultural mediators of language learning across diverse contexts; (4) evidence-based practices yielding measurable proficiency improvements; (5) contextually responsive instruction acknowledging institutional, resource, and demographic variation.

Future research should employ longitudinal designs tracking proficiency development across secondary years, examine within-school factors (classroom climate, peer interaction, student engagement) alongside institutional factors, investigate mechanisms through which pedagogical quality translates to proficiency improvements, and explore sustainable implementation pathways for evidence-based instructional enhancements in

resource-constrained contexts.

### 5.10. Future Research Recommendations

- Longitudinal studies tracking proficiency trajectories across complete secondary cycle with annual assessments
- Experimental intervention studies testing pedagogical approach effectiveness through randomized controlled trials
- Qualitative case studies examining high-performing and struggling learners' language learning processes and practices
- Classroom ethnographic studies investigating how pedagogical quality manifests in classroom interaction and learning opportunities
- Mixed-methods investigations integrating quantitative proficiency data with qualitative exploration of motivation, identity, and language practices
- Multilevel modeling examining how classroom and institutional factors influence individual student proficiency development
- Comparative studies across Indian regions and internationally examining how context influences proficiency development patterns

### 5.11. Conclusion

This quantitative study examined English language proficiency among 345 secondary school students across multiple skill dimensions, with particular attention to pedagogical determinants and sociocultural influences. Results revealed significant developmental progression across grades ( $F = 48.67$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .221$ ), with Grade 11 students demonstrating substantially superior proficiency to Grade 9 ( $d = 1.34$ ). Language component skills demonstrated distinct patterns of interrelationship ( $r = .356-.678$ ), with vocabulary and reading most strongly associated with overall proficiency.

Pedagogical quality variables—teacher qualification, instructional resources, teaching

methodology, and instructional hours—significantly predicted proficiency outcomes beyond grade and student variables alone. Hierarchical regression identified grade level ( $\beta = .421$ ), prior achievement ( $\beta = .289$ ), and SES ( $\beta = .189$ ) as significant predictors, collectively explaining 36.1% of proficiency variance. Medium of instruction substantially influenced outcomes, with early English-medium students substantially outperforming English-subject-only peers ( $d = 0.93$ ).

Gender showed negligible effects on proficiency ( $d = 0.08$ ), suggesting relatively equitable outcomes across genders within this sample. These findings underscore that English language proficiency emerges as product of developmental progression, individual student characteristics, and importantly, pedagogical quality and institutional resources available to support language learning.

Implications for policy and practice include: (1) prioritizing teacher qualification and professional development as high-leverage proficiency improvement strategies; (2) ensuring equitable resource distribution supporting all students' English learning; (3) transitioning from traditional grammar-focused toward communicative task-based methodologies; (4) implementing developmentally appropriate, component-integrated instruction sequences; (5) considering medium-of-instruction effects on proficiency outcomes; (6) acknowledging and leveraging sociocultural diversity within inclusive, culturally sustaining pedagogies.

This research contributes empirical evidence regarding language proficiency development within Indian secondary education, providing data-informed foundation for evidence-based policy decisions and instructional improvement initiatives. Future research employing longitudinal designs, experimental interventions, and qualitative investigation of mechanisms through which pedagogical quality influences proficiency would further elucidate language development processes and optimal instructional practices for diverse learners within varied sociocultural contexts.

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