

ENGLISH LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY AMONG PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN MADHYA PRADESH: AN ANALYTICAL STUDY

Mudasir Bashir¹, Dr. Rajkumari Sudhir² and Dr. Deepa S. Kumar³

¹Research Scholar, Department of English, Govt. Maharani Laxmi Bai Girls P.G. Autonomous College, Bhopal

²Professor, Department of English, Govt. Sarojini Naidu Govt. Girls P.G. Autonomous College, Bhopal (M.P.)

³Professor, Department of English, Govt. Maharani Laxmi Bai Girls P.G. Autonomous College, Bhopal (M.P.)

Abstract

This study examines the English language proficiency of primary and secondary school students in Madhya Pradesh, India, focusing on the disparities between urban and rural areas, as well as between government and private schools. Utilizing a mixed-methods approach, data were collected through standardized language assessments and surveys administered to students and teachers across various districts. The findings reveal significant gaps in English proficiency, with rural and government school students exhibiting lower performance levels compared to their urban and private school counterparts. Factors contributing to these disparities include limited access to qualified English teachers, inadequate resources, and socio-economic challenges. The study underscores the need for targeted interventions to enhance English language education, particularly in under-resourced areas, to bridge the proficiency gap and improve overall educational outcomes.

Keywords: English language proficiency, primary education, secondary education, Madhya Pradesh, urban-rural disparity, government and private schools.

Introduction

English has emerged as a global language and plays a vital role in communication, education, and professional advancement. In India, English is not only a second language but also a crucial medium of instruction in many schools, particularly in urban areas and private institutions. Its significance in competitive examinations, higher education, and career prospects further amplifies the importance of early and effective English language acquisition. However, the proficiency levels of English among school students vary widely across different states and socio-economic backgrounds. In a diverse and populous state like Madhya Pradesh, these variations are particularly pronounced due to disparities in educational infrastructure, teacher availability, and socio-economic status.

Madhya Pradesh, being a mix of urban and rural landscapes, presents unique challenges and opportunities in the realm of language education. While urban private schools often emphasize English proficiency and provide students with ample resources and exposure, government schools in rural areas frequently struggle with insufficient qualified staff, lack of modern teaching aids, and limited language exposure outside the classroom. These gaps lead to an uneven distribution of language skills among students, which can significantly affect their academic performance and future opportunities.

In recent years, national and state education policies have increasingly recognized the need to improve English language teaching in schools, especially in government institutions. Despite such efforts, there is a dearth of region-specific research that examines the ground realities of English language proficiency in Madhya Pradesh. Understanding the current proficiency levels among primary and secondary school students—along with the underlying causes of disparities—is essential for designing effective educational interventions.

This study, therefore, seeks to provide a comprehensive analytical overview of English language proficiency among school students in Madhya Pradesh. By comparing students from government and private schools as well as those from urban and rural areas, the research aims to identify key trends, challenges, and potential solutions. This analysis is critical for educators, policymakers, and stakeholders committed to enhancing the quality of English education across the state and ensuring equitable learning outcomes for all students.

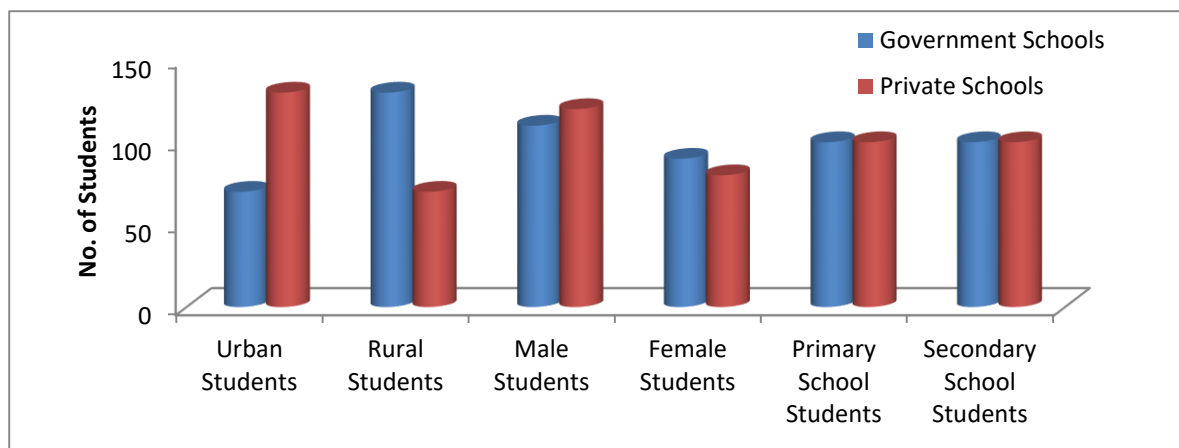
Research Methodology

A mixed-methods approach was employed to gather comprehensive data on English language proficiency. The study involved 400 students from both government and private schools across urban and rural areas of Madhya Pradesh. Data collection tools included standardized English language assessments and structured surveys targeting both students and teachers. The assessments evaluated various language skills, while the surveys collected information on teaching methodologies, resource availability, and socio-economic factors. Statistical analyses were conducted to identify patterns and correlations between students' proficiency levels and the influencing factors.

Result and Discussion

Table 1: Demographic Profile of Respondents

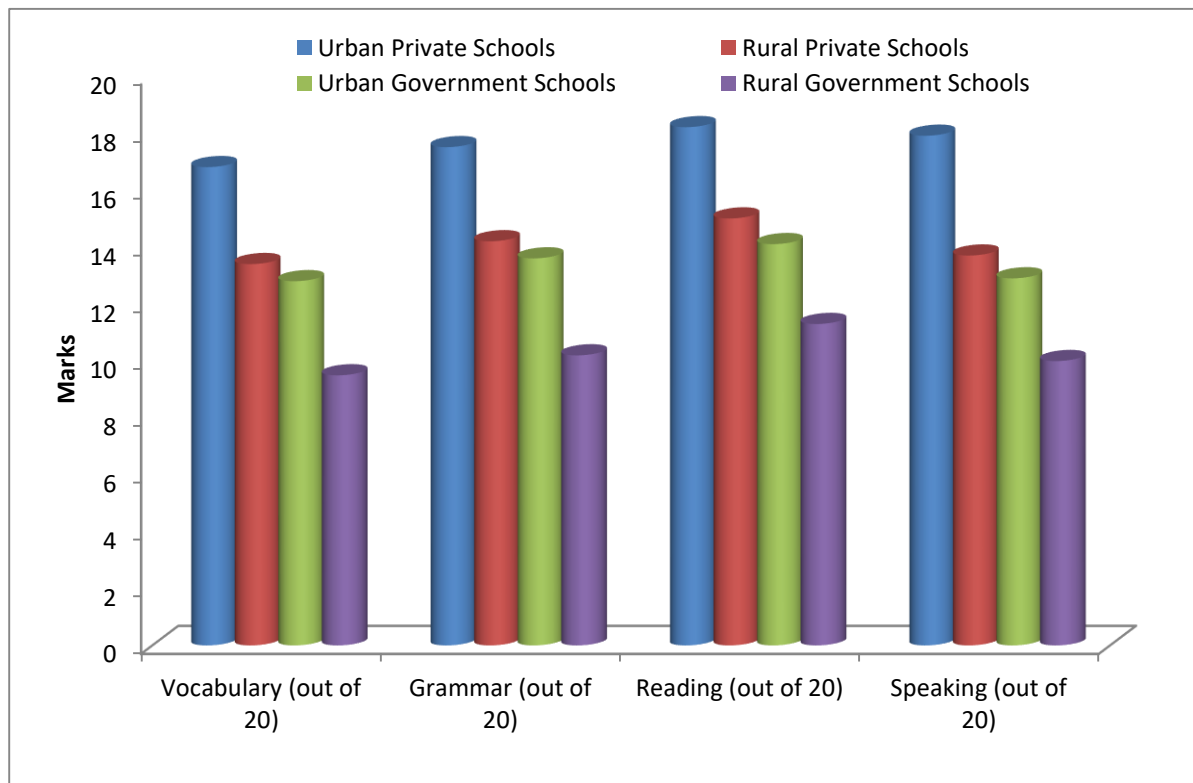
Category	Government Schools (n=200)	Private Schools (n=200)	Total (n=400)
Urban Students	70	130	200
Rural Students	130	70	200
Male Students	110	120	230
Female Students	90	80	170
Primary School Students	100	100	200
Secondary School Students	100	100	200



The demographic table and graph shows an equal distribution of students across government and private schools ($n = 200$ each) and between primary and secondary levels ($n = 200$ each). However, a noticeable contrast is observed in the urban–rural composition: private schools had a significantly higher proportion of urban students (65%) compared to government schools, where the majority of students (65%) came from rural areas. This demographic spread highlights one of the key structural disparities in English language exposure—urban students tend to have more access to resources, including trained teachers, English-speaking environments, and learning materials.

Table 2: Average English Proficiency Scores by Group

Group	Vocabulary (out of 20)	Grammar (out of 20)	Reading (out of 20)	Speaking (out of 20)	Total (out of 80)
Urban Private Schools	16.8	17.5	18.2	17.9	70.4
Rural Private Schools	13.4	14.2	15	13.7	56.3
Urban Government Schools	12.8	13.6	14.1	12.9	53.4
Rural Government Schools	9.5	10.2	11.3	10	41

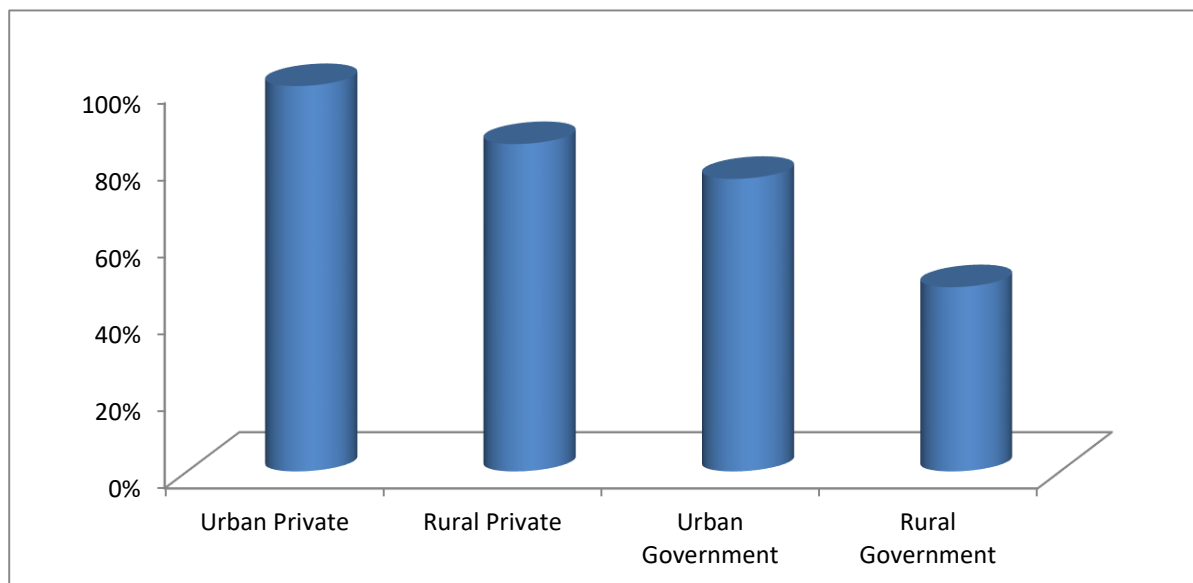


This table and graph provides insight into the proficiency levels of students in four language skill areas—vocabulary, grammar, reading, and speaking.

- **Urban private school students** performed the best across all four components with an overall average of 70.4 out of 80. This high performance reflects their better access to resources, English-speaking environments, and professional instruction.
- **Rural private school students** also performed well (56.3), though their scores were slightly lower than their urban counterparts, indicating some infrastructural and exposure limitations.
- **Urban government school students** averaged a total score of 53.4, slightly lower than rural private schools, which could be attributed to less exposure and fewer English-speaking opportunities, despite the urban setting.
- **Rural government school students** scored the lowest with an average of 41.0. This suggests severe limitations in instructional quality, lack of trained English teachers, and minimal exposure to spoken and written English.

Table 3: Teacher Availability in English Subjects

School Type	% Schools with Trained English Teachers
Urban Private	100%
Rural Private	85%
Urban Government	76%
Rural Government	48%



Above table and graph presents the percentage of schools across different categories that have trained English teachers. The data reveals a stark disparity in teacher availability based on both **location** (urban vs. rural) and **type of school** (private vs. government). All urban private schools (100%) reported the presence of trained English teachers, showcasing their strong emphasis on quality education and recruitment of qualified staff. Rural private schools followed closely, with 85% of them employing trained English teachers, indicating relatively better efforts in staff deployment even in non-urban settings.

In contrast, the government school sector shows a significant drop in trained teacher availability. While 76% of urban government schools reported having trained English teachers, rural government schools lag far behind, with only 48% having qualified English

instructors. This considerable gap points toward systemic challenges in teacher recruitment, training, and retention in rural government schools. The lack of trained English teachers in rural areas not only hampers the students' ability to develop core language skills but also contributes directly to the low proficiency levels observed in the earlier tables. The data underscores the urgent need for policy-level interventions focused on teacher training programs, rural staff incentivization, and deployment of English language specialists to bridge this critical gap in educational quality and equity.

The analysis revealed significant disparities in English language proficiency among students:

- **Urban vs. Rural Areas:** Students in urban areas demonstrated higher proficiency levels compared to their rural counterparts. This aligns with findings from previous studies indicating that urban regions generally exhibit higher levels of English proficiency due to better access to quality education and resources .
- **Government vs. Private Schools:** Students from private schools outperformed those from government schools in English proficiency assessments. A study conducted in Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh, found that government school students exhibited higher error percentages across various language categories compared to private school students, indicating gaps in vocabulary retention, pronunciation accuracy, and word association skills .
- **Socio-Economic Factors:** Students from lower socio-economic backgrounds faced additional challenges, including limited exposure to English outside the classroom and a lack of supplementary learning materials.

These findings are consistent with national trends, where rural students often encounter significant challenges in acquiring English proficiency due to factors such as a lack of qualified teachers, inadequate resources, and limited exposure to the language .

Conclusion

The study highlights substantial disparities in English language proficiency among primary and secondary school students in Madhya Pradesh, influenced by urban-rural divides, type of school management, and socio-economic factors. Addressing these challenges requires targeted interventions, including the recruitment and training of qualified English teachers, provision of adequate learning resources, and the implementation of policies aimed at reducing socio-economic barriers to education. Enhancing English language education, particularly in under-resourced areas, is crucial for bridging the proficiency gap and improving overall educational outcomes.

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