# Language Proficiency Assessment of Marathi Medium Students

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**ABSTRACT**      *"Throughout India, there is an extraordinary belief, among almost all castes and classes, in both rural and urban areas, in the transformative power of English. English is seen not just as a useful skill, but as a symbol of a better life, a pathway out of poverty and oppression. Aspiration of such magnitude is a heavy burden for any language, and for those who have the responsibility for teaching it, to bear. The challenges of providing universal access to English are significant, and many are bound to feel frustrated at the speed of progress. But we cannot ignore the way that the English language has emerged as a powerful agent for change in India".(Graddol, 2010, p. 120)English in India today is a representation of people's aspirations for quality education and complete participation in national and international life as well as zest for self-development and in economic development of the country. The present research is an attempt to explore English language proficiency among Marathi medium students in Aurangabad city. The research identifies the language lacunae among the students to improve proficiency and accuracy. This is done through the provision of precise, concrete, and explicit action plans. The research focuses on understanding language proficiency and accuracy. It specifically tries to understand the lacking areas of English language proficiency in terms of pre-defined writing skills and socio-cultural parameters and helps to provide an action plan to improve English language proficiency and accuracy. This research is an attempt to develop greater confidence and proficiency in the use of English language skills necessary for social, academic, and individual purposes. It develops the capacity to appreciate the literary use of English, its ability, competency, and knowledge required for individual growth.*

***Key words***: *Language Proficiency, Language Proficiency Assessment, Marathi Medium Students.*

**Introduction**: The English word has power and those who have command over it, can acquire command over the world. Because of English language knowledge one can overcome poverty. Language illiteracy leads to suppression and marginalization in the society. English is a powerful element to cause change. Change here means the change of environment in terms of political, commercial, geographical, and international relations. Language has a basic capacity that distinguishes humans from other living beings; it remains potentially a capable medium of expressing ideas, thoughts, concepts, feelings, and moods. It is a systematic means of exchanging ideas by the use of symbols or sounds. It is a mental faculty of vocal communication. The ability to use a language is not just a single unified skill. An individual who uses language proficiently possesses multiple abilities, such as the ability to listen, read, speak, and write in a particular language. Broadly, language skills are divided into four types, viz.; listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Speaking and writing are productive skills that the user displays. Listening and reading, on the other hand, are receptive skills in the sense that the language user receives information from the written or spoken form of the language. Very

often the language user is involved in using a combination of skills. For instance, a participant in a conversation, for example, has not only to listen but also to speak. The Indian students need urgently to acquire the skills of reading, listening, writing and speaking in English, in that order, to survive within the educational framework" (Agnihotri. R. K, 1994, p. 347). Today English enjoys an important place in the secondary school syllabi and curriculum. An NCERT study found that English is the medium of instruction in 8.17% of schools at the secondary stage and there are 5.58%. 59.43% and 3 5.12% of schools in India offer English as the first, second, and third languages respectively. (NCERT, 1992, p. 218) Language acquisition is one of the central topics in cognitive science. Every theory of cognition has tried to explain it; probably no other topic has aroused such controversy. Possessing a language is quintessentially a human trait: all normal humans speak, but no nonhuman animal does. Language is the main vehicle by which we know about other people's thoughts. Every time one speaks, he/ she reveals his/her language proficiency. Nonetheless, learning a first language is something most children do successfully in a matter of a few years and without the need for formal lessons. With language so close to the core of what it means to be human, it is not surprising that children's acquisition of language has received so much attention. Anyone with strong views about the human mind would like to show those children's first few steps in the right direction. Language acquisition is not only inherently interesting; studying it is one way to look for concrete answers to questions that permeate cognitive science. Language Proficiency means having sufficient command of the language for a particular purpose. Language proficiency refers to the ability of an individual to speak or perform in an acquired language. It is the ability to produce language smoothly and effortlessly. It also means the construction of language in real-time without undue pausing or hesitation. Accuracy on the other hand refers to producing correct sentences using correct grammar and vocabulary. It also means the ability to speak or write without making any grammatical, vocabulary, punctuation, and other errors.

**Language Proficiency Assessment**: Language Proficiency Assessment is a universal feature of social life. If we look at history, people have been put to the assessment to prove their capabilities. They are put to the test to establish their credentials. Assessment has proliferated rapidly in modern society. Newer forms of language assessment may no longer involve the ordeal of a single test performance under time constraints. Learners may be required to build up a portfolio of written or recorded oral performance for assessment". (McNamara, 2014, p. 4)As McNamara pointed out assessment is being done based on building portfolio of written or recorded oral performances. Learners may be observed in their normal activity of communication in the language classroom or routine pedagogical tasks. They may be asked to carry out activities outside the classroom context and provide evidence of their performance. A pair of learners is asked to take part in role plays or group discussion as a part of oral assessment. Test may be taken with the help of computer application, which may tailor the form of the test to the particular abilities of individual candidates.

"Language test plays a powerful role in many people's lives acting as a gateway at important transitional moment in education, in employment, and in moving from one country to another (McNamara, 2014, p. 4). As McNamara rightly pointed out, language is a powerful tool for assessing people for various purposes. Results of language proficiency testing can allow one to take several decisions; for instance identifying students for admission to a particular course, the ability of an individual to cope up with work or education abroad or a particular task.

"Language test can be a valuable source of information about the effectiveness of learning and teaching. Language tester

regularly uses tests to help diagnose students' strengths and weaknesses to assess students' progress and to assist in evaluating students achievements". (Bachman, 2010, p. 3). Language tests are also frequently used as a source of information in evaluating the effectiveness of different approaches to language teaching. This acts as a source of feedback on learning and teaching. Language test thus provides useful input into the process of language teaching.

**The objectives of the research:**
1. To understand the English language proficiency among the students of Marathi schools.
2. To point out various ways to improve English language proficiency and accuracy.
**The hypotheses of the research:** 1. Marathi medium students are accurate in using English language
**Limitation of the research:** Throughout the whole research work only the English writing

skill of Marathi medium students of Maharashtra State (SSC) board from Aurangabad city is taken into consideration.
 **Research method used:** A conclusive type of research method is used, wherein conclusions have been drawn. Data are collected with the help of questionnaire methods from Marathi medium schools. Language Proficiency Test has been developed to collect the data. Collected data are scrutinized, tabulated, and analysed to testify the hypothesis by SPSS software. Spearman's Rank correlation is used to test the hypothesis: Marathi medium students are accurate in using English language.
**Data Analysis:** The following table is the statistical description of Marathi Medium Students (MMS). This is based on the score obtained on them in Language Proficiency Test (LPT). LPT has four main sections namely Grammatical Knowledge. Textual Knowledge, Functional Knowledge, and Sociolinguistic Knowledge.

*Table No. - 1: Table showing the statistical description of Marathi medium students' LPT.*

| | | GrammaticalKnowledge | Textual Knowledge | Functional Knowledge | SociolinguisticKnowledge | Grand Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Number of Students | Valid | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| | Missing | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Mean | | 10.98 | 14.06 | 9.17 | 4.56 | 38.77 |
| Std. Deviation | | 5.245 | 8.294 | 8.698 | 3.208 | 22.903 |
| Skewness | | .066 | .041 | .411 | .375 | .146 |
| Std. Error of Skewness | | .241 | .241 | .241 | .241 | .241 |
| Kurtosis | | -1.099 | -1.494 | -1.368 | -.733 | -1.336 |
| Std. Error of Kurtosis | | .478 | .478 | .478 | .478 | .478 |
| Minimum | | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 |
| Maximum | | 21 | 28 | 26 | 13 | 80 |

*Source: Primary data collected and analyzed by the researcher.*

**Grand Total (Language Proficiency):** Descriptive statistics for performance of Marathi Medium Students of all the sections is presented with the help of a Histogram.

*Table No-2: Table showing descriptive statistics for the performance of Marathi medium students of a language proficiency test for histogram.*

| Grand Total | |
|---|---|
| Mean | 38.77 |
| S.D. | 22.903 |
| Skewness | 0.146 |
| 1/3 of mean | 12.92 |
| Kurtosis | -1.336 |
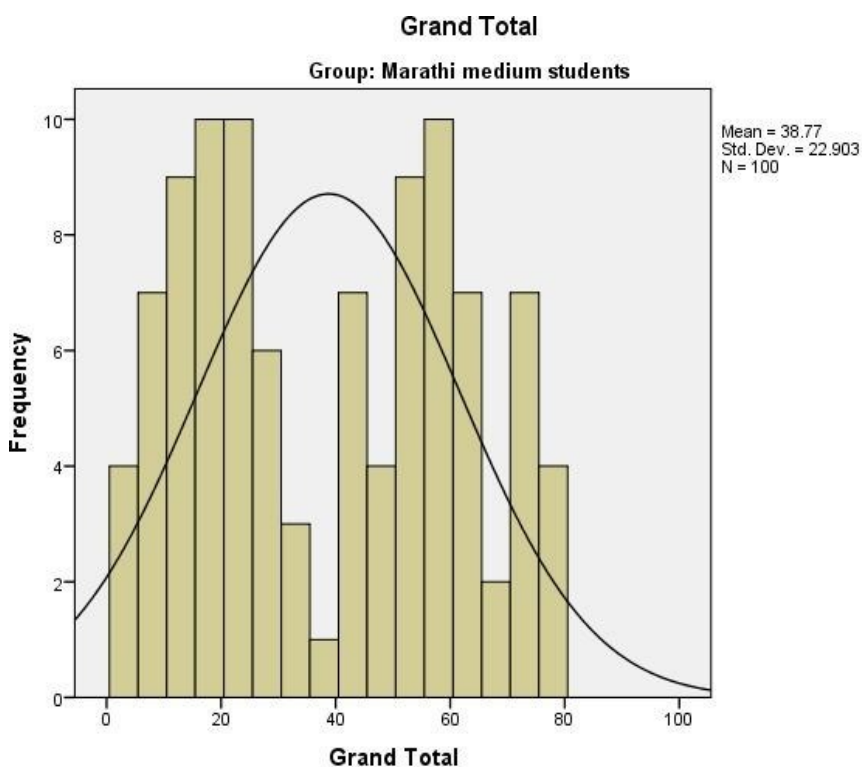


*Source: Data analyzed by researcher*

Histogram: 1 : *Histogram showing performance in languageproficiency of MMS.*

S.D. = 322.903, since S.D. is more than 1/3 of mean, there is more dispersion in data set.
Skewness = 0.146, since Skewness is positive value the curve is right skewed curve and data is piled upon the left.
Kurtosis = -1.336 , since kurtosis is negative value , the curve is short and flat. The values of skewness, kurtosis and dispersion in the data set show that mean is less representative of data in Grand Total also.
Since S.D. for Grand Total is more than 1/3 of mean, the score of entire test has been converted to ordinal sale using "recode into diferent variable" option in IBM-SPSS. This newly generated ordinal scale category's responses are less than20, 21 to 40, 41 to 60, 61 to 80 and 80 to 100.

*Table 3: Table showing descriptive statistics for the performance of Marathi medium students of language proficiency for bar chart.*

| Grand Total | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Frequency | Percentage | Valid Percentage | Cumulative Percentage |
| less than 20 | 30 | 30 | 30 | 30 |
| 21 to 40 | 20 | 20 | 20 | 50 |
| 41 to 60 | 30 | 30 | 30 | 80 |
| 61 to 80 | 20 | 20 | 20 | 100 |
| Total | 100 | 100 | 100 | |

Source: Data Compiled by researcher



**Grand Total (Binned)**
**Group: Marathi medium students**
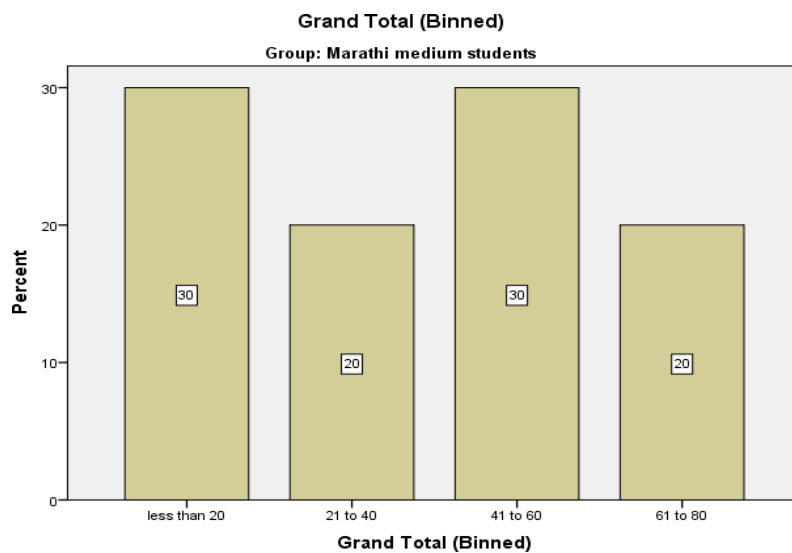
***Bar Chart No**. 1: Bar chart showing performance  in  language proficiency test of MMS.*

From the above frequency table and Bar Chart, it can be seen that 30 % of the Marathi medium students scored less than 20 marks in the Test. 20% of students scored between 21 to 40 marks. 30 % of the students  scored between 41 to 60  marks, and only 20% of students have scored between 60 to
80. (The minimum score for this section is 1 and the maximum is 100 marks)

Therefore, it can be concluded that no student from Marathi medium schoolscould score more than 80 marks. 50 % of the students have secured less than40% marks in the test. Only 20% students secured 60 to 80 percent marks in the test. Research reveal thus that the proficiency seems very less among Marathi medium students.

**Hypothesis Testing:**
Hypothesis No.1. Marathi medium students are accurate in using English language.

Following hypotheses are formulated to test above mentioned hypothesis.
$H_0$: *Performance of Marathi medium students is unrelated with respect tothe following* (r = 0).

A. Grammatical Knowledge & Textual Knowledge
B. Grammatical Knowledge & Functional Knowledge
C. Grammatical Knowledge & Sociolinguistic Knowledge

*$H_1$: Performance of Marathi medium students is related with respect to thefollowing*
($r \neq 0$).
A. Grammatical Knowledge & Textual Knowledge
B. Grammatical Knowledge & Functional Knowledge
C. Grammatical Knowledge & Sociolinguistic Knowledge
(Level of Significance α= 0.05)

## Descriptive Statistics:

Spearman's Rank Order Correlation is computed to check the associationbetween the set variables.

*Table No. - 4. 32: Table showing statistical description about relationshipbetween variables of Marathi medium students.*

| Sr. No | Pairs | | Correlation Coefficient | 'P' Value | Results |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Grammatical Knowledge | Textual Knowledge | 0.779 | 0.000 | Strong positive relationship |
| 2 | Grammatical Knowledge | Functional Knowledge | 0.740 | 0.000 | Strong positive relationship |
| 3 | Grammatical Knowledge | Sociolinguistic Knowledge | 0.601 | 0.000 | Moderate posactive relationship |

## *Interpretation:*

From the above table it can be inferred that in all the three cases 'P' values are less than level of significance (0.05). The correlation of coefficient for grammatical knowledge and textual knowledge (r) = 0.779, for grammatical knowledge and functional knowledge (r)= 0.740 and for grammatical knowledge and sociolinguistic knowledge (r) = 0.601. It can therefore be concluded that a strong relation exists between grammatical knowledge and textual knowledge, grammatical knowledge and functional knowledge, and grammatical knowledge and sociolinguistic knowledge among Marathi medium students.

The coefficient of correlation (r) between the two variables grammatical knowledge and textual knowledge of Marathi medium students is 0.779. This shows the presence of a strong positive association between them. The coefficient of correlation between grammatical knowledge and functional

knowledge is also strong, where r = 0.740. A moderately positive association exists between sociolinguistic knowledge and grammatical knowledge. The correlation coefficient of these two variables is r = 0.601.
'P' values at a 5% significance level were computed to testify to the empirical analysis conducted. P values are found significant. Since 'P' values are significant, the null hypothesis is rejected.

Findings reveal that the association of grammatical knowledge of Marathi medium students with textual, functional, and socio-linguistic knowledge is strong. Therefore, the researcher may infer that the usage of grammar for achieving textual, functional, and socio-linguistic proficiency is found high among Marathi medium students.

Therefore, through this research, it can be concluded that no student from Marathi Medium schools could score more than 80

marks. 50 % of the students have secured led than 40% marks in the test. Only 20% of students secured 60 to 80 percent in the test. Research reveals thus that proficiency seems very low among Marathi medium students. The association compiled through the coefficient of correlation between Grammatical Knowledge & Textual Knowledge, Grammatical Knowledge& Functional Knowledge, and Grammatical Knowledge& Sociolinguistic Knowledge of Marathi medium students is high. Hence, it seems appropriate to state that the Marathi medium students are accurate in applying English grammar. The researcher suggests to the Government their educational policy reformation, to the school administration and teachers for imparting quality education which in turn helps to improve language proficiency, to the parents and students for the inculcating change within students Government should conduct the audit of school on regular basis. The audit must be of teaching activities, students' performance, and the facilities, rules, and regulations provided by the Government. The government should encourage and support to conduct of extracurricular activities like debate competitions, elocution competitions, essay writing competitions and so on at the district level and state levels and provide accommodation and transport facilities for the students. They also should support to purchase of electronic audio-visual aids, such as LCD, Projector, Computers, CDs, and the like. The teacher should improve self-vocabulary by stressing on accurate pronunciation and using it in class because students imitate the teacher and follow the same in their lives. Teachers should be Competent, Proficient, Diagnostician, Guide, Motivator, Planner, Facilitator, Leader, user of language, Coordinator Creator & Knowledge Provider. To be proficient and competent he/ she should watch English movies, listen to English News, read English newspapers, and encourage students to do the same. The teacher should eradicate the fear of failure because most of the Marathi medium students are afraid to speak English because of fear of failure. The teacher should encourage students to develop their own imaginative, creative, and innovative ideas about English and rectify them if necessary. This is how English language proficiency and accuracy can be improved.

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