

English Language Proficiency Among the Secondary Students of Chümoukedima District of Nagaland

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Abstract

Language proficiency plays a very important role in the academic, social, and professional development of individuals. It refers to an individual's ability in using language skills such as listening, speaking, reading, and writing for meaningful communication. English language proficiency helps learners improve their comprehension, communication skills, critical thinking, and confidence in various educational settings. Students with higher proficiency in English are able to perform better in academics and participate actively in classroom activities. The paper studies the English language proficiency among secondary school students in the Chümoukedima District of Nagaland, with specific comparisons based on gender, locality, and type of school. A sample of 200 secondary school students were selected from various schools of Chümoukedima district through simple random sampling technique. Data were collected using a standardized English language proficiency test. The collected data were analyzed using mean, standard deviation, and t-test to test the formulated null hypotheses. The findings revealed significant differences in English language proficiency with regard to gender, where females performed significantly better than males leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis. With regard to locality, no significant difference was found between urban and rural students, and the null hypothesis was accepted. A significant difference was found between students studying in private and government schools, resulting in rejection of the null hypothesis. The findings suggest the need for improving English language teaching practices, especially in government schools, and providing equal academic support to enhance proficiency levels among all secondary school students.

Keywords: English language proficiency, secondary school students, gender, locality, private and government schools, Chümoukedima district, Nagaland

Introduction

Language proficiency plays a very important role in the academic, social, and professional development of an individual. It refers to an individual's ability to use language skills such as listening, speaking, reading, and writing for meaningful communication. English language proficiency helps learners improve their comprehension, communication skills, critical thinking, and confidence in various educational settings. These language skills are interrelated and contribute to the overall language development of learners. Reading helps students improve comprehension and vocabulary,

writing enhances expression of ideas. As it not only enables us to express our thoughts and beliefs but also acts as a tool for learning and an effective agent to enhance understanding (Singh and Geeta, 2021). Proficiency is very essential to become successful in career building in English language because English is considered to be the spectacle to see the world (Dhaka, 2023). English has become an important global language and plays a significant role in education, communication, and professional growth (Agnihotri, 2001). English has become an important international language, widely used in different fields and professions and is also taught in schools and universities in both developed and developing countries. Thus, it has become the most spoken language around the globe (Tangeme, 2022). Proficiency in English language positively influence an individual's life as it opens doors to opportunity, knowledge, and growth. It also provides a window to a global spectrum of entertainment, information, and helps people understand cultures effectively. English language proficiency is defined as the degree of a learner's skill with which a learner can use a language, such as how well a learner can read, write, speak or understand a language. In addition, it also refers to a learner's skill in using the English language for a specific purpose e.g.-academic or occupational purpose. English proficiency may be measured through the use of proficiency test such as TOEFL, TOEIC, GRE, and IELTS etc (Hossain, 2018). However, the level of proficiency varies due to factors such as gender, locality and type of school (Vincy and D'Souza, 2023). Differences in locality, classroom and outside the classroom exposure and type of school also impact learning outcomes (Meganathan, 2017). At the secondary school level, English language proficiency forms the foundation for advanced learning and effective communication skills. In the educational context of India, English is generally taught as a second language, and students often face challenges in mastering listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills. (Qayoom, Saleem & Mansoor, 2021). Singh and Geeta (2021) stated that language proficiency requires not only knowledge of a language but also mastery of the four basic language skills—listening, speaking, reading, and writing. True proficiency involves the ability to use these skills effectively. Therefore, we have to understand the factors that affects English language proficiency is necessary for improving teaching-learning practices and ensuring better educational outcomes. Several studies have examined institutional influences on language development, particularly differences between private and government schools. Research conducted in developing educational contexts indicates that private school students often demonstrate high level of language proficiency due to greater exposure to English, improved instructional resources, and communicative teaching practices (Altinyelken, 2010; ASER, 2022). However, evidence also suggests that government school students show strong motivation to improve their English language proficiency when provided with adequate instructional support and learner-centered teaching strategies (NCERT, 2021).

Review of Related Literature

Bachman (1990) defines that the language proficiency is the ability to use language in real-life communication. Gorman (1970) argued that students with limited English proficiency often face difficulties in understanding classroom instruction, which negatively impacts their learning outcomes. English is an important language in India as it has become the globally accepted language. Maleki and Zangani (2007) described proficiency as an individual's level of competence in a specific area, which determines how effectively they can function in actual language-use situations. Sahragard and Bahardo's (2009) investigation of students studying in English language and literature revealed that students who are more interested and competent in the English language are more successful in their career. Mahindroo (2014) studied on Language proficiency of English among higher secondary learners in relation to locality with an aim to measure the language proficiency in English among

students with the help of Language Proficiency Test in English and compare with English Medium and Hindi Medium students. The sample of the study comprised of the six hundred learners. It was descriptive research in nature where survey method was employed. The data were collected by the investigator by personally visiting and administration of the tests. The findings revealed that rural and urban students differ significantly from each other in English Language Proficiency. While the urban students performed better as compared to rural students. Hossain (2018) investigated on English language proficiency level among the secondary school students in relation to gender. The aim of the study was to find out the difference in proficiency level between male and female students. The sample comprised of two hundred secondary students- hundred males and females respectively. The study revealed that there is no significant relationship of English language proficiency level with regard to gender of the students. Singh & Geeta (2021) studied that language is present across the curriculum and findings revealed that language across curriculum approach ensures holistic development of learners. Agarwal's (2024) investigated on the dominance of English language proficiency in all domains of Education. It was a survey-based study which revealed that the male trainee teachers have significantly higher level of English Language Proficiency than the Female trainee teachers. Dhaka (2023) studied the English language proficiency among secondary school students with an objective to find out the difference in English language proficiency level among secondary school students in relation to their gender and locality on a sample of hundred students. The findings revealed that there is no significant difference in English Language Proficiency level with respect to gender and locality of the students but there is significant difference between urban boys and urban girls secondary school students. Sangeeta et al. (2024) conducted a study on English language proficiency of 8th grade students of Sirsa District. The sample selected is two hundred students from private and government schools with equal number of males and females. It is found that Private school students performed better than the government school students and that the female students performed better than the male students. Debnath (2024) investigated on English language proficiency among secondary school students in India plays an important role in education, and future employment opportunities.

Rationale of the study

English language proficiency is closely connected with the school curriculum because English is not only taught as a subject but also used as a medium of instruction in many schools. In the context of Nagaland, English occupies significant position in both education and administration. English is the official language of Nagaland and is widely used for official communication, administration, education, and legal purposes. The Nagaland Legislative Assembly declared English as the official language of the state in 1967. English also serves as the medium of instruction in most schools and higher educational institutions in the state. The importance of English in Nagaland is closely linked to the linguistic diversity of the state. Nagaland is home to several tribes, each having its own distinct language or dialect. Since there is no single common tribal language spoken throughout the state, English functions as a link language among different communities. Due to this multilingual situation, the state government has preferred English as the medium of instruction in schools and for official purposes.

The school curriculum in Nagaland also reflects the importance of English language learning. Most schools affiliated with the Nagaland Board of School Education (NBSE), as well as CBSE-affiliated schools, use English as the medium of instruction, particularly at the secondary and higher secondary levels. English is taught as a compulsory subject. However, students studying in different types of schools and locations may not always receive the similar levels of exposure, teaching

methods, or learning support in English. Differences in school facilities, teacher availability, home environment, and access to learning resources may influence students' proficiency in English Language. Although English is a compulsory subject in schools, there is limited research focusing specifically on the proficiency in English language of secondary school students in Chümoukedima District. It is important to understand whether factors such as gender, school location (urban or rural), and type of school (private or government) make any difference in students' English language performance. Identifying these differences can help teachers, school administrators, and policymakers improve teaching strategies and provide better support where needed. Therefore, the research is conducted to study the English language proficiency among the secondary school students in Chümoukedima District. The findings of this study will help in understanding the current level of students' English language proficiency and in suggesting ways to strengthen English language learning in the district.

Objectives of the Study

1. To assess the level of English language proficiency of secondary school students of Chümoukedima District.
2. To study English language proficiency of secondary school students with regard to Gender.
3. To study English language proficiency of secondary school students with regard to Locality.
4. To study English language proficiency of secondary school students with regard to Type of School.

Research Question

What is the level of the level of English language proficiency of secondary school students of Chümoukedima District?

Hypothesis

H₀₁: There is no significant difference in English language proficiency of secondary school students with regard to Gender.

H₀₂: There is no significant difference in English language proficiency of secondary school students with regard to Locality.

H₀₃: There is no significant difference in English language proficiency of secondary school students with regard to Type of School.

Delimitations

The present study English language proficiency among the secondary students of Chümoukedima district of Nagaland is confined to reading and writing only.

Research Methodology

In the present study, data were analysed using both descriptive and inferential statistics to interpret the English language proficiency level of secondary school students.

Population of the study

The population includes all the secondary school students enrolled in class IX (2024-2025) in the Chümoukedima district of Nagaland.

Sample

Table 1: Represent the sample

Type of School	Locality	Number of Students	Total
Government Schools	Urban	50	100
	Rural	50	
Private Schools	Urban	50	100
	Rural	50	
Grand Total			200

The study is based on a sample of 200 students selected through the simple random sampling technique. The sample comprised 100 students from government schools, including 50 urban and 50 rural students, 100 students from private schools, including 50 urban and 50 rural students.

Tools and Technique of collecting data

In the present study, *English Language Proficiency Test* developed by K. S. Mishra and Ruchi Dubey for assessing the English language proficiency of secondary school students is administered. The test consists of 56 items designed to measure the overall English language proficiency of the students. The tool is standardized and suitable for assessing English language proficiency at the secondary school level, which it does using mean, standard deviation, and independent samples *t*-test.

Reliability and Validity

Split half and Kuder Richardson reliability coefficient of the test have been found to be 0.85 and 0.84 respectively (N=100), which are significant at 0.01 level of significance. Face Validity has been found by asking experts belonging to the field of Education and English. Concurrent validity has been found by correlating by English Language Proficiency Test scores and English marks in U.P. Board High School Examination of the students. It was found to be .50.

Procedure for collecting data

Data were collected by visiting the school personally. Due permission was obtained from the authorities of the school. The students were explained the aim of the research and assured its confidentiality. After building rapport with the students, data were collected.

Data analysis

Descriptive statistics such as mean, standard deviation, frequency, and percentage were used to summarize and present the data systematically. The mean was used to determine the average level of English language proficiency of the students, while standard deviation was used to measure the variability or dispersion of scores from the mean. Frequency and percentage were used to classify students into different proficiency levels and to show the distribution of respondents across categories. Further, the Mean $\pm$ Standard Deviation method was used to establish norms for categorizing students into low, moderate, and high proficiency levels. Inferential statistics, specifically the t-test, was used to compare the English language proficiency of students across different groups such as gender, locality, and type of institution, and to determine whether the observed differences were statistically significant at the 0.05 level of significance. Objective wise analysis and interpretation is described below:

Objective 1: To assess the level of English language proficiency of secondary school students of Chümoukedima District.

Research Question 1: What is the level of the level of English language proficiency of secondary school students of Chümoukedima District?

Table 2.0: Showing the scores obtained by Secondary school students in English Language Proficiency

Sl. No	Raw Score	No of students	Percentage	Level of Proficiency
1	48 & above	10	5	Extremely Proficiency
2	42 to 47	12	6	Highly Proficiency
3	35 to 41	40	20	Above Average Proficiency
4	26 to 34	84	42	Average Proficiency
5	19 to 25	38	19	Below Average Proficiency
6	14 to 18	12	6	Low Proficiency
7	14 & Below	4	2	Extremely Low Proficiency

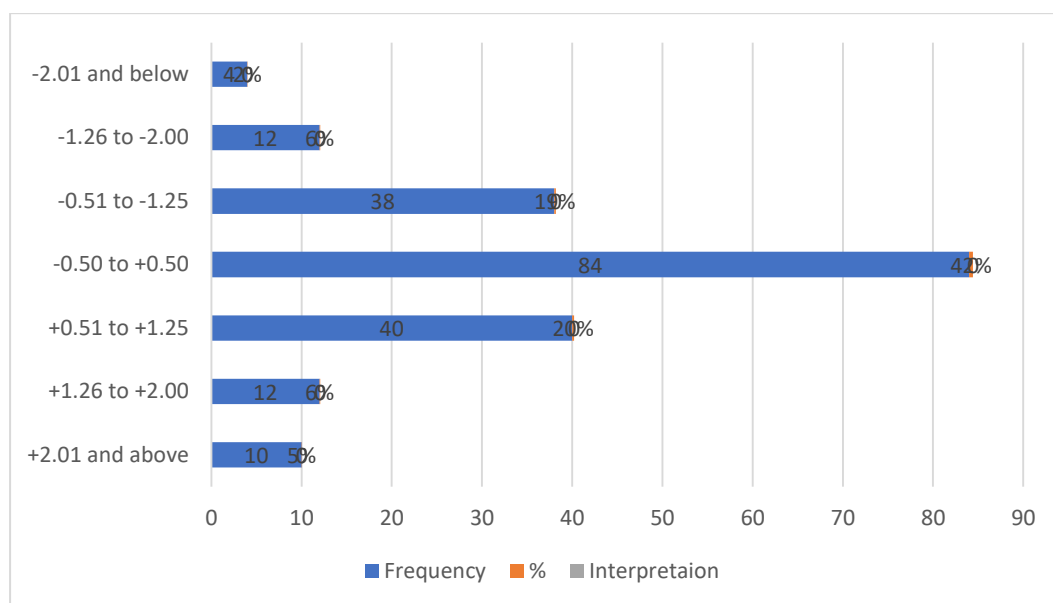


Figure 1: Represents the scores obtained by Secondary school students in English Language Proficiency

Interpretation:

Table 2.0 and Figure 1 represent the overall findings that much of the students possess average English language proficiency, with fewer students scoring very high and very low levels. This suggests that the general proficiency level is satisfactory, but there is need for improvement among students with lower level of English language proficiency the English language proficiency levels of 200 secondary school students based on their test scores. Most of the students are found to have an average English proficiency, as 84 (42%) students scored in the average score range (26–34). Number of 40 (20%) students showed above average proficiency, while 12 (6%) students showed high proficiency, and 10 (5%) students showed extremely high proficiency. On the lower side, 38 (19%) students were in the below average proficiency level, showing that they need improvement in English skills. Similarly, 12 (6%) students had low proficiency, and only 4 (2%) students had extremely low proficiency, indicating very weak English language ability.

Table 2.1: Presenting the overall Mean and Standard Deviation of English Language Proficiency of Secondary School Students

Variable	N	Mean	SD
English Language Proficiency	200	30.08	8.48

Interpretation:

Table 2.1 representing overall mean score of English language proficiency of the 200 secondary school students was 30.08, with a standard deviation of 8.48. This indicates that the average level of English language proficiency of the students is moderate, and the variation in scores

shows a moderate spread around the mean, suggesting differences in proficiency levels among the students.

Objective 2: To study English language proficiency of secondary school students with regard to Gender.

H₀₁: There is no significance difference in English language proficiency of secondary school students with regard to Gender

Table 2.1: Comparison of English Language Proficiency of the students with Regard to Gender

Gender	N	Mean	SD	P value	t value	Remarks
Male	100	28.34	8.77	0.0056	2.80	Significant
Female	100	31.82	8.82			

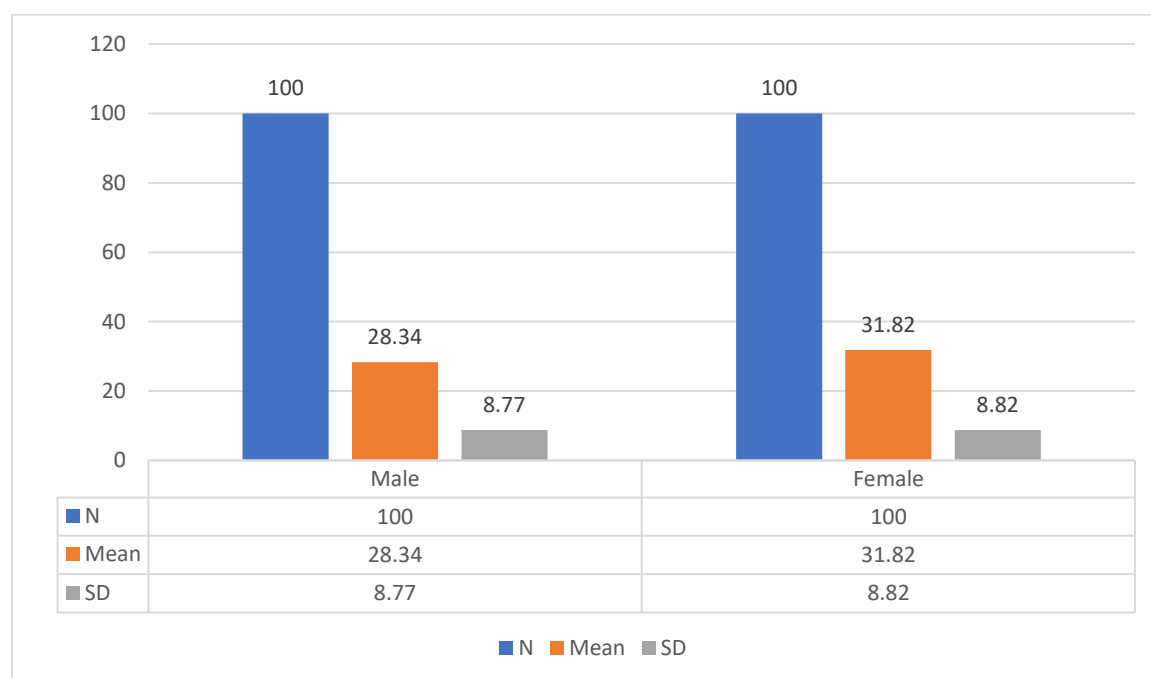


Figure 2: Represents the comparison of English Language Proficiency of the students with Regard to Gender

Interpretation:

Table 2.1 and Figure 2 indicated that female students scored higher than male students in English language proficiency. The difference is statistically significant ($p < 0.05$). This indicates that gender has a significant influence, with females outperforming males leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis. It aligns with the results found by (Agarwal, 2023) while contradicts to the results found by (Dhaka, 2023; Hossain 2018).

Objective 2: To study English language proficiency of secondary school students with regard to Locality

H₀₂: There is no significance difference in English language proficiency of secondary school students with regard to Locality

Table 3: Comparison of English Language Proficiency of the students with Regard to Locality

Locality	N	Mean	SD	P value	t value	Remarks
Rural	100	29.98	7.98	0.87	0.16	Not significant
Urban	100	30.18	9.85			

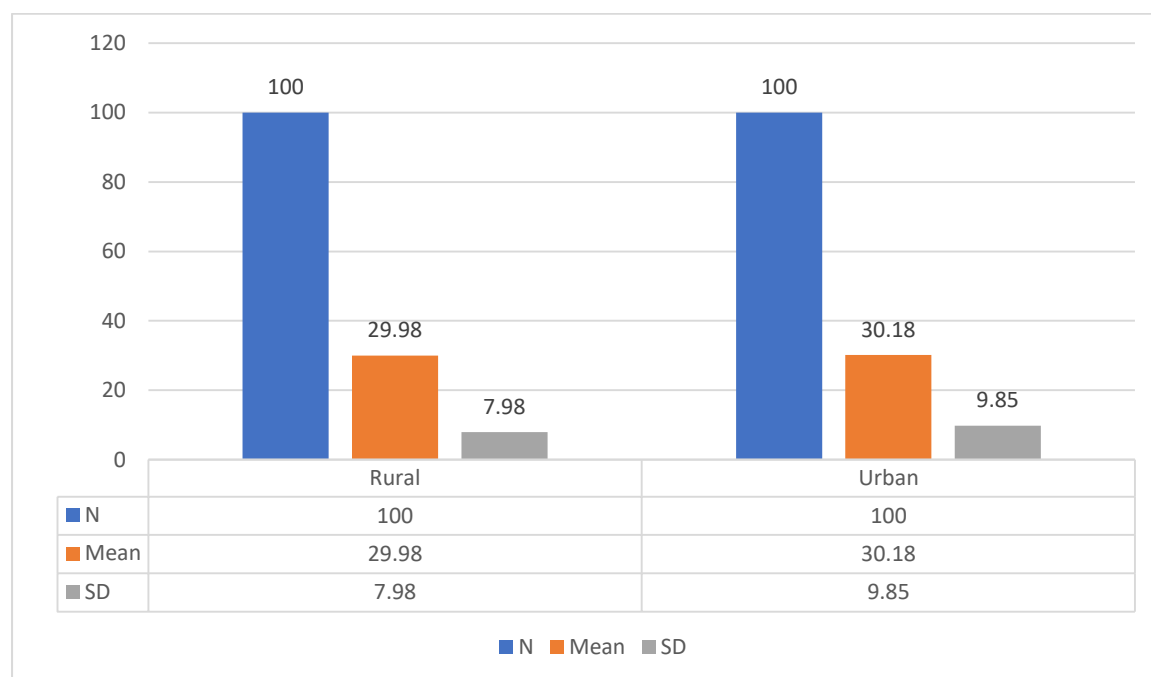


Figure 3 Represents the comparison of English Language Proficiency of the students with Regard to Locality

Interpretation:

Table 3 and figure 3 shows that Urban students scored slightly higher than rural students; however, the difference is not statistically significant ($p > 0.05$). This suggests that locality does not significantly affect English language proficiency and therefore the null hypothesis is accepted. (Patum & Tok, 2025; Fu & Liu 2024; Dhaka, 2023; Saikia, 2018) also found that there is no significant difference in English language proficiency between rural and urban secondary school students.

Objective 3: To study English language proficiency of secondary school students with regard to Type of School

H₀₃: There is no significance difference in English language proficiency of secondary school students with regard to Type of School

Table 4: Comparison of English Language Proficiency with Regard to Type of School

Type	N	Mean	SD	P value	t value	Remarks
Government	100	27.26	7.20	< 0.001	4.69	Significant
Private	100	32.90	9.64			

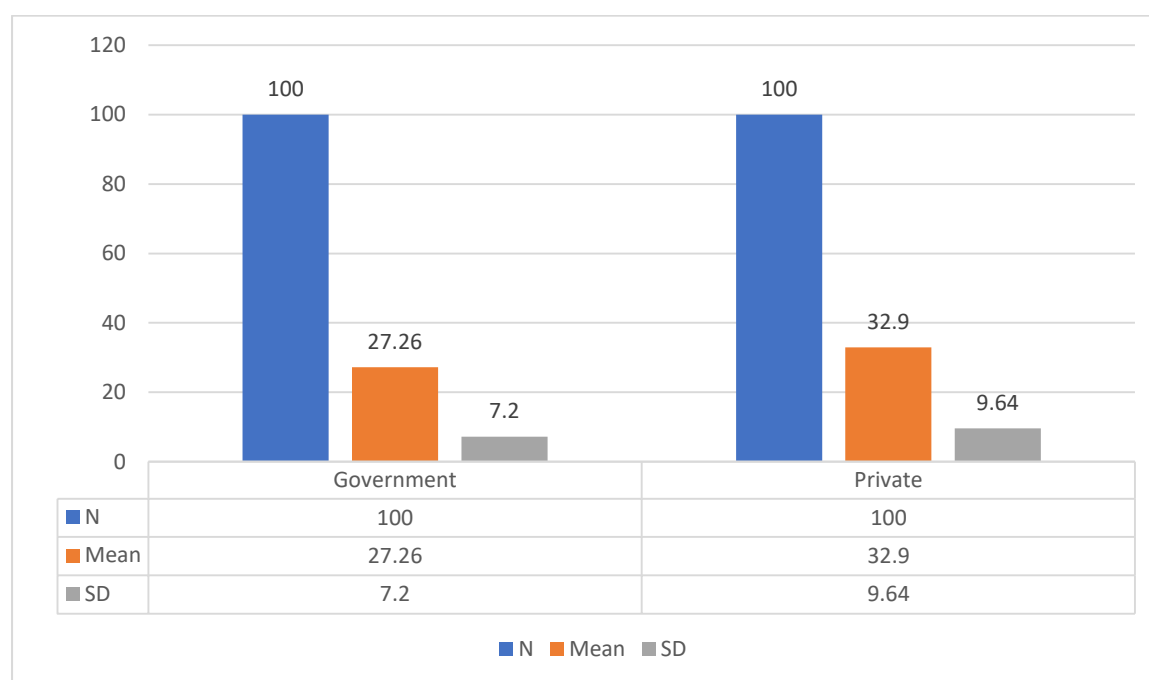


Figure 4: Comparison of English Language Proficiency with Regard to Type of School

Interpretation:

Table 4 and Figure 4 indicates that private school students scored significantly higher than government school students. The difference is highly significant, indicating that type of institution plays a major role in English language proficiency. Private school students perform significantly better than government school students leading in rejection of the null hypothesis. The results are in line with the studies conducted by (Kumar, 2021; Sangeeta et al., 2024; Patum & Tok 2025)

Findings of the study

The major findings along with the objectives of the study are presented below:

- It is found that out of 200 hundred, 84 students which represents 42% have average level of proficiency. while 12 (6%) students have high and 10 (5%) students have extremely high level of proficiency. On the other side, 38 (5%) students which is were found having below average, 12 (6%) students had low and only 4 students had extremely low proficiency, showing that they need improvement in English language proficiency.
- This finding shows that female students performed better in English language proficiency compared to male students.
- It is found that the difference between urban and rural secondary students is not statistically significant. This suggests that locality does not significantly affect English language proficiency
- Private school students perform significantly better than government school students resulting in rejection of the null hypothesis.

Conclusion

The present study examined the level of English language proficiency among secondary school students and analyzed differences based on gender, locality, and type of institution. The findings reveal several important patterns that are discussed below in relation to the objectives of the study. The overall analysis indicates that the level of English language proficiency among secondary school students is moderate. This suggests that while students possess a basic level of proficiency in English, there is considerable scope for improvement. The relatively high standard deviation further indicates variability in proficiency levels, pointing toward unequal learning outcomes among students. With regard to gender, the study found that female students significantly outperform male students in English language proficiency. A significant finding of the study is the impact of the type of institution, where private school students performed significantly better than government school students. This may be due to better infrastructure, availability of learning resources, smaller class sizes, and greater emphasis on English language instruction in private schools. The difference highlights the role of institutional support in shaping students' language proficiency.

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