

A Survey-Based Approach to Test the Language Proficiency Skills of Higher Secondary Students

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Abstract

English is a global language essential for education, careers, and communication. In India, it serves as a lingua franca, yet learning English as a Second Language (ESL) remains a challenge, especially for higher secondary students in Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh. Limited exposure, ineffective teaching methods, socio-economic barriers, and lack of modern learning resources hinder English proficiency, particularly among government school students, who exhibit higher error rates in pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, and sentence structuring compared to private school students.

This study analyzes the key challenges faced by ESL learners in Bhopal and explores effective teaching strategies to enhance language proficiency. By assessing pronunciation, synonym and antonym recognition, abbreviation comprehension, and word meaning tests, the study highlights significant differences in learning outcomes between private and government schools. Findings indicate that modern teaching techniques, technology integration, and teacher training programs can help bridge the learning gap. The study recommends Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), Task-Based Learning (TBLT), and digital tools to improve English fluency and comprehension. Curriculum reforms, increased technological access, and interactive learning strategies are suggested to enhance ESL education. These insights are valuable for educators, policymakers, and language instructors in developing effective interventions for ESL learning in Bhopal and similar multilingual settings.

Keywords: English, Language, School, technology, innovation

I. Introduction

English has become a global language, significantly impacting education, business, and communication in the modern world. In multilingual countries like India, English serves as a lingua franca, enabling communication across diverse linguistic communities. Proficiency in English is crucial for academic excellence, career progression, and international mobility, making it an essential skill in today's globalized economy [1]. However, learning English as a Second Language (ESL) remains a formidable challenge, particularly for students in non-English-speaking environments. The situation is particularly evident in Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh, where higher secondary students struggle to acquire English proficiency due to limited exposure, ineffective teaching methodologies, socio-economic constraints, and psychological barriers [2], [3].

The importance of English proficiency in shaping a student's future cannot be overstated. Strong English skills enhance academic success, access to higher education, and employability, while weak language skills can lead to reduced opportunities and lower self-confidence [4]. Despite India's national curriculum incorporating English, ESL instruction often fails to achieve fluency due to overcrowded classrooms, lack of qualified teachers, and outdated pedagogical approaches [5]. Many schools, particularly government institutions, still rely on rote memorization instead of adopting communicative and interactive teaching methods [6]. As a result, students from Hindi-medium schools in Bhopal frequently struggle with fluency, pronunciation, comprehension, and written communication, hampering their performance in competitive exams, job opportunities, and real-world interactions [7], [8].

One of the key challenges in ESL education in Bhopal is the stark disparity between private and government school students. Studies suggest that private school students tend to perform better in English language proficiency tests due to better resources, smaller class sizes, and exposure to English-based content [9]. Conversely, government school students often come from economically weaker backgrounds, where English is rarely spoken at home, limiting their ability to practice the language outside the classroom [10]. This linguistic gap leads to lower confidence, fear of making mistakes, and hesitation in verbal communication, further discouraging students from actively using English [11].

Moreover, the lack of technological integration in ESL instruction is another major obstacle. In today's digital age, technology-driven learning tools, such as language learning applications, interactive videos, and virtual classrooms, play a crucial role in improving English proficiency [12]. However, in many government

schools in Bhopal, students and teachers have limited access to digital resources, making it difficult to implement blended learning approaches that can enhance language acquisition [13]. The absence of modern teaching aids forces students to rely solely on textbooks, which are often insufficient for developing conversational and practical English skills.

This study aims to identify the key challenges faced by higher secondary students in Bhopal while learning ESL and to explore effective instructional strategies that can enhance English proficiency among learners. By focusing on pedagogical innovations, technology integration, and socio-cultural influences, this research seeks to provide practical recommendations for improving ESL education in Bhopal. Addressing these challenges through effective teacher training, digital learning tools, and communicative teaching methods can significantly bridge the gap between curriculum-based learning and real-world language application, ultimately helping students achieve greater fluency and confidence in English [14], [15].

II. Methodology

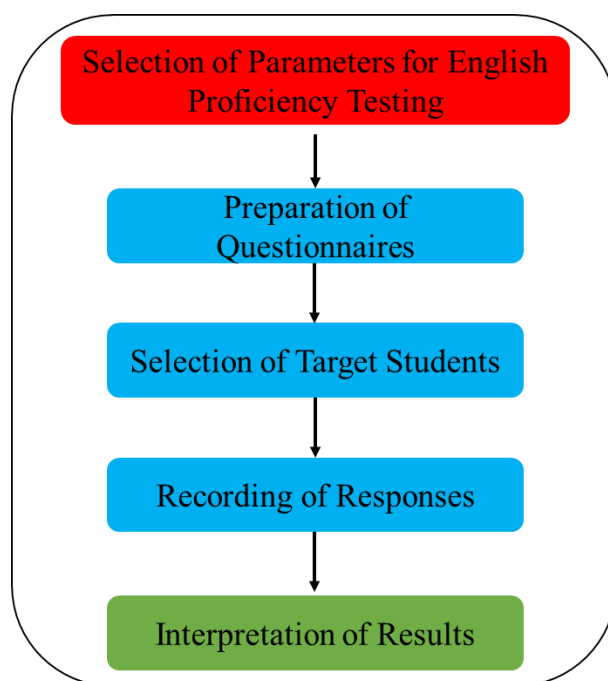


Figure1.Process Flow Chart

Data was collected from 400 respondents (Private and Government School from Bhopal district). Objective of this study was to study the challenges encountered in learning english as a second language. A questionnaire was prepared to test the students of all schools. The methodology adopted to carry out the research work is shown in figure 1.

III. Results and Discussion

3.1. Type of School

It was found that out of 400 students 49.2% of students were from Convent School and 50.8% of students were from Government School who were participated in the survey.

Table1.Type of school

School Type	Frequency	Percent
PrivateSchool	210	52.5
GovernmentSchool	190	47.5

3.2. Adverb test using questionnaire for students

The Adverb Test evaluates students' ability to correctly identify and use adverbs in English. The bar graph (figure 2) presents the number of students who made errors while attempting the test, comparing private school students (green bars) and government school students (blue bars) across six different words (Word-1 to Word-6). The results clearly indicate that government school students committed more errors than private school

students across all six words. The difference in performance is particularly evident in Word-5 and Word-6, where government school students made the highest number of errors, exceeding 120 students in each case. In contrast, private school students had fewer errors, with their highest mistake count remaining below 110 students. A notable trend is observed in Word-2 and Word-4, where private school students performed significantly better, with errors staying below 80 students, whereas government school students' errors exceeded 100. This suggests that government school students struggle more with recognizing and applying adverbs correctly in sentences compared to their private school counterparts. The findings imply a gap in language proficiency, potentially caused by differences in teaching methodologies, exposure to English, and comprehension skills. Private school students appear to have a stronger grasp of adverbs, while government school students require additional support in understanding their usage. This highlights the need for targeted teaching strategies, including contextual learning, interactive exercises, and exposure to real-world applications of adverbs to improve English proficiency among government school students.

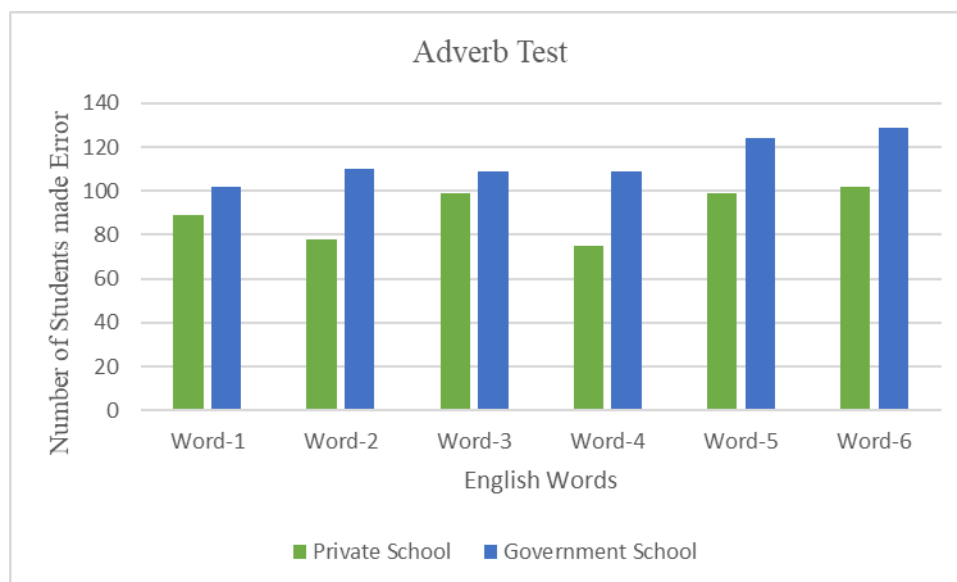


Figure2.Adverbttest results

3.3. Conjunction test using questionnaire for students

The Conjunction Test assesses students' ability to correctly identify and use conjunctions in English sentences. The bar graph (figure 3) compares the number of students who made errors in this test from private schools (green bars) and government schools (blue bars) across six different words (Word-1 to Word-6). The results clearly demonstrate that government school students committed significantly more errors than private school students across all six words. The difference is particularly noticeable in Word-1, Word-4, and Word-5, where government school students had the highest error rates, exceeding 120 students in each case. In contrast, private school students consistently had fewer errors, with their highest mistake count remaining below 90 students. An interesting observation is that government school students struggled uniformly across all words, with errors ranging between 110 and 125 students, indicating a consistent difficulty in understanding conjunctions. On the other hand, private school students showed relatively stable performance, with their error rates remaining between 75 and 90 students, suggesting a better grasp of conjunction usage. The findings highlight a learning gap in conjunction recognition and application, with government school students demonstrating greater difficulty in using conjunctions correctly. This disparity could stem from differences in teaching methods, lack of exposure to English reading materials, or inadequate reinforcement of conjunction rules in sentence structures.

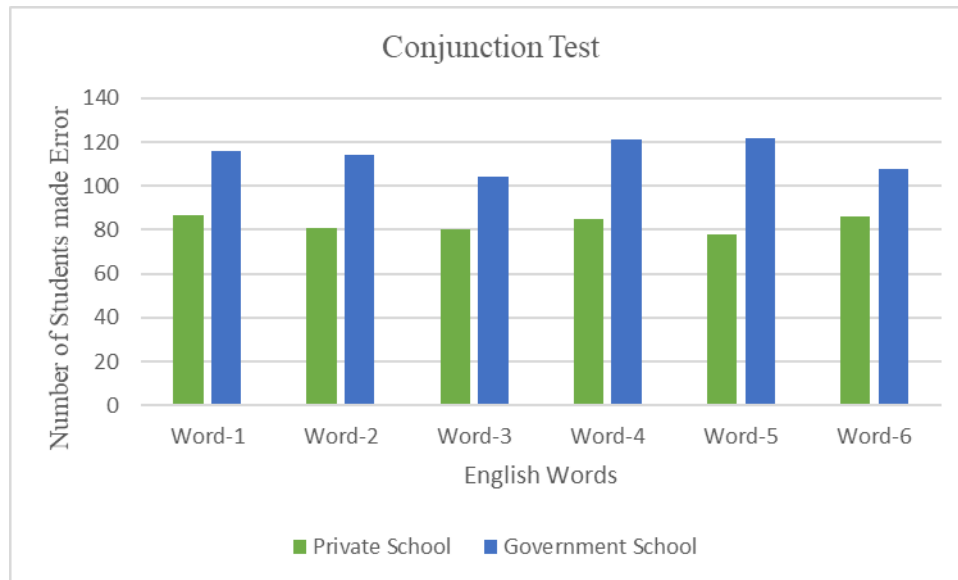


Figure3.Conjunction test results

3.4. Noun test using questionnaire for students

The Noun Test evaluates students' ability to correctly identify and use nouns in English. The bar graph (figure 4) compares the number of students who made errors from private schools (green bars) and government schools (blue bars) across six different words (Word-1 to Word-6).The results indicate that government school students committed more errors than private school students in every tested word, demonstrating a greater struggle with noun identification and usage. The most noticeable difference is in Word-3, where government school students had the highest error count, exceeding 140 students, while private school students had a significantly lower error count, close to 120 students.A pattern can be observed where private school students had relatively stable error rates, staying between 80 and 120 students, whereas government school students consistently had higher error counts, fluctuating between 100 and 140 students. This suggests that government school students face greater difficulty in distinguishing nouns from other parts of speech, potentially due to a weaker foundational understanding of grammar rules.

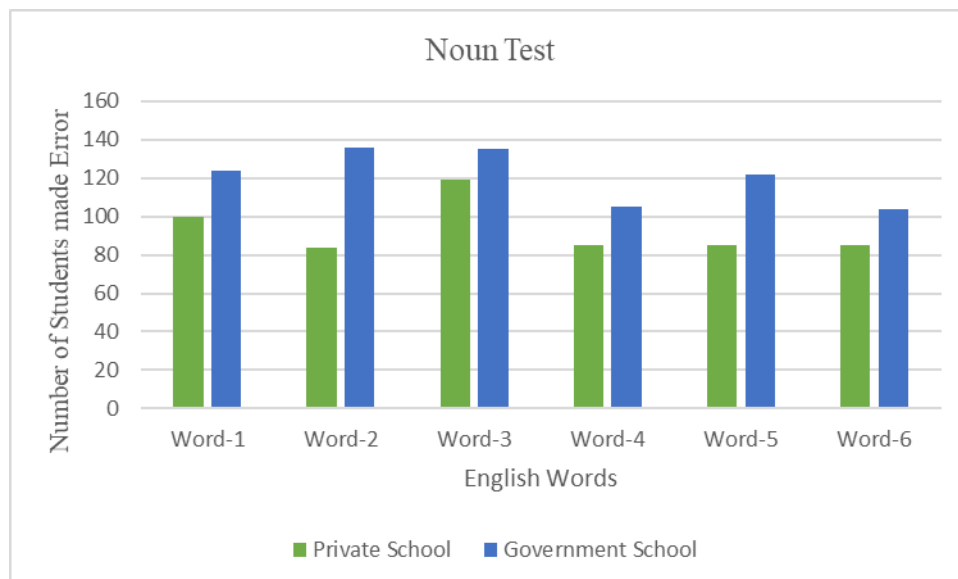


Figure4.Noun test results

3.5. Vowel test using questionnaire for students

The Vowel Test assesses students' ability to correctly identify and use vowel sounds in English. The bar graph (figure 5) presents the number of students who made errors, comparing private school students (green bars) and government school students (blue bars) across six different words (Word-1 to Word-6).Unlike previous tests, the differences between private and government school students are less pronounced, as both

groups demonstrated relatively similar error rates across all words. However, government school students made slightly more errors than private school students in most words, particularly in Word-3 and Word-4, where the number of errors exceeded 90 students. A key observation is that error rates are relatively high for both groups, suggesting that vowel identification and pronunciation remain challenging for a significant portion of students, regardless of school type. The smallest difference in error rates is observed in Word-6, where both groups made nearly equal mistakes, indicating that some words were equally challenging for private and government school students.

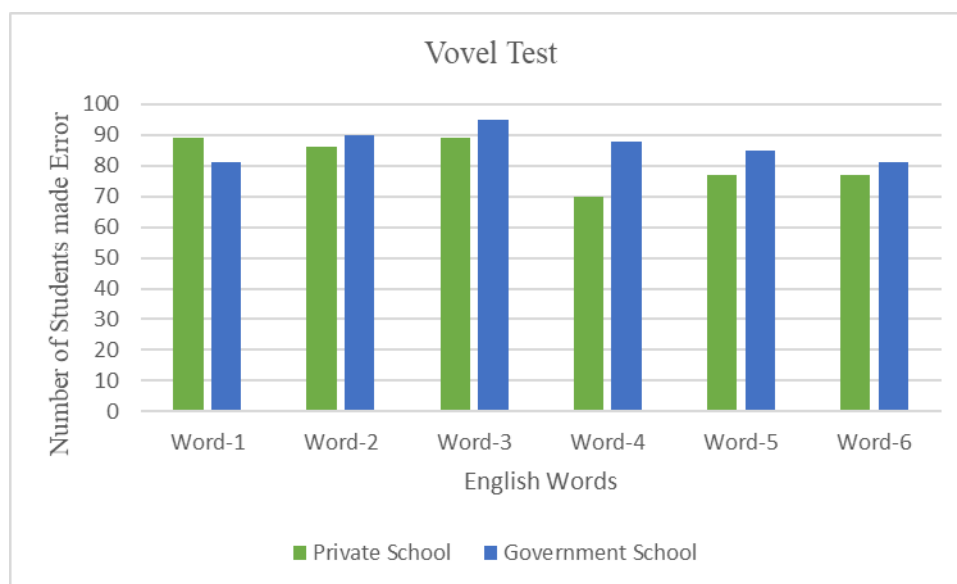


Figure5.Vowelresults

3.6. Verb test using questionnaire for students

The Verb Test assesses students' ability to correctly identify and use verbs in English. The bar graph (figure 6) presents the number of students who made errors, comparing private school students (green bars) and government school students (blue bars) across six different words (Word-1 to Word-6). The results show a clear trend where government school students consistently committed more errors than private school students across all tested words. The difference is particularly pronounced in Word-1, Word-4, and Word-5, where government school students' errors exceeded 120 students, while private school students had significantly fewer mistakes, staying below 100 students for most words. A notable pattern is that private school students' errors remain relatively stable, fluctuating between 90 and 110 students, whereas government school students consistently had higher error counts, ranging between 110 and 125 students. This indicates that government school students struggle more with verb identification and usage, likely due to weaker foundational grammar knowledge and insufficient practice in sentence structuring.

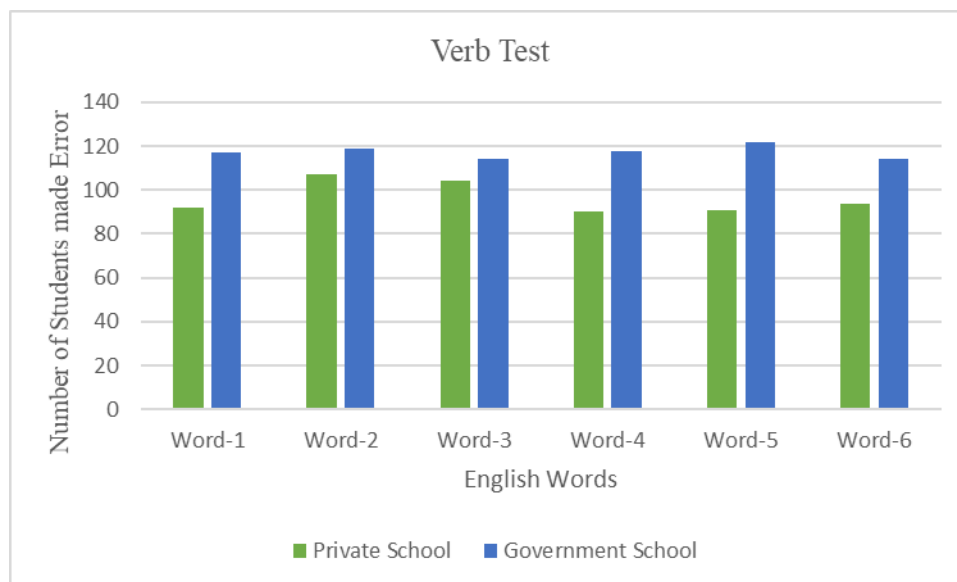


Figure6. Verb test results

IV. Interpretation of Results

The analysis of the Conjunction, Noun, Verb, Adverb, and Vowel Tests reveals a consistent trend where government school students committed more errors across all categories compared to private school students. Each test was designed to evaluate students' ability to correctly identify and use different parts of speech, highlighting significant gaps in English language proficiency between the two groups.

In the Conjunction Test, government school students struggled considerably with correctly identifying and using conjunctions, making significantly more errors than their private school counterparts. The highest number of errors was observed in Word-1, Word-4, and Word-5, where government school students exceeded 120 mistakes per word, while private school students' errors remained under 90 per word. This suggests that government school students face difficulty in understanding sentence structures and the role of conjunctions in linking ideas. A lack of exposure to complex sentence patterns and limited practice in reading and writing may contribute to this challenge.

Similarly, the Noun Test results indicate that government school students had significantly higher error rates, especially in Word-3, where over 140 students made mistakes compared to private school students, who had a relatively lower mistake count of around 120 students. This pattern suggests a fundamental struggle in identifying nouns and distinguishing them from other parts of speech. The error trend implies that government school students might lack sufficient exposure to structured grammar instruction, leading to confusion in recognizing nouns within sentences.

The Verb Test results further confirm this disparity, as government school students consistently had higher error counts compared to private school students. The most significant difference in performance was seen in Word-1, Word-4, and Word-5, where government school students' errors exceeded 120, while private school students-maintained error rates below 100. This suggests a lack of understanding of verb forms, tenses, and subject-verb agreement, which are essential for sentence construction. The inability to use verbs correctly may stem from rote learning practices rather than conceptual understanding of grammar rules.

The Adverb Test presented a similar pattern, where government school students made more errors across all tested words, with the highest mistake rates occurring in Word-5 and Word-6 (over 120 errors). Private school students performed better overall, with most of their error counts staying below 100 students per word. The struggle in recognizing adverbs suggests difficulty in differentiating adverbs from adjectives and understanding their role in modifying verbs. This could be due to limited practical exercises in grammar lessons or lack of reinforcement through reading and writing activities.

The Vowel Test, however, showed a different trend compared to the other tests. While government school students still had higher error rates, both private and government school students struggled with vowel recognition and pronunciation. The difference in performance between the two groups was not as significant, indicating that vowel-related errors are common across all students, regardless of school type. This suggests that phonetics and pronunciation training need to be strengthened for both groups, as difficulties in vowel recognition can impact overall pronunciation and spelling accuracy.

The results from these tests highlight several important trends. First, government school students consistently exhibited higher error rates across all parts of speech, indicating weaker foundational grammar

knowledge and less exposure to English usage in practical contexts. Second, private school students performed better overall, but they also showed challenges, particularly in vowel recognition, suggesting that phonetics training could be beneficial for all students. Third, the largest performance gap between the two groups was observed in conjunctions, verbs, and adverbs, which are essential for sentence structuring and effective communication.

V. Conclusion

The findings suggest that government school students require more targeted interventions in grammar instruction, particularly in sentence structuring and word recognition. Strategies such as interactive learning, contextual grammar practice, and exposure to reading materials can help improve their language skills. Additionally, the challenges faced in vowel recognition indicate a need for phonetic-based learning methods for all students, ensuring better pronunciation and spelling accuracy. By implementing more effective teaching techniques, technology-enhanced learning, and structured grammar exercises, students in both private and government schools can enhance their English proficiency and improve their overall academic performance.

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