

## Exploring english speaking proficiency among public and private school students of Nepal: a comparative study

## Explorando el dominio del habla inglesa entre estudiantes de escuelas públicas y privadas de Nepal: un estudio comparativo

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### ABSTRACT

This study aimed to determine and compare the English-speaking proficiency of students in public and private schools in Nepal and to propose pedagogical implications based on the findings. A purposive non-random sampling technique was used to select a sample of 30 grade 12 students from three public and three private schools in Banke district. Data were collected using a speaking test paper developed based on the Grade Twelve textbook, and data analysis was conducted using mixed method analysis. Findings revealed that private school students outperformed public school students in terms of grammar, vocabulary, and content. However, both groups of students struggled with proper tense usage in their speaking. Private school students were also better in pronunciation and fluency, while public school students were better at expressing themselves on the given content. The study suggests that there is a need to focus on speaking proficiency in English language education in Nepal and that pedagogical approaches should be tailored to the needs of learners in public schools to help them improve their English-speaking proficiency. The study also highlights the need for teacher training programs and the development of relevant instructional materials to address the challenges of teaching speaking skills in English language education in Nepal.

**Keywords:** Vocabulary, Speaking proficiency, Grammar, Content

### RESUMEN

Este estudio tuvo como objetivo determinar y comparar el dominio del habla del idioma Inglés entre estudiantes de escuelas públicas y privadas en Nepal para proponer implicaciones pedagógicas basadas en los hallazgos. Se utilizó una técnica de muestreo intencional no aleatoria para seleccionar una muestra de 30 estudiantes de 12° grado de tres escuelas públicas y tres privadas del distrito de Banke. Los datos se recopilieron mediante una prueba de expresión oral desarrollada con base en el libro de texto del grado doce, y el análisis de los datos se realizó mediante un análisis de métodos mixtos. Los hallazgos revelaron que los estudiantes de escuelas privadas superaron a

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los estudiantes de escuelas públicas en términos de gramática, vocabulario y contenido. Sin embargo, ambos grupos de estudiantes tuvieron dificultades con el uso adecuado del tiempo verbal al hablar. Los estudiantes de escuelas privadas también obtuvieron mejores calificaciones en pronunciación y fluidez, mientras que los de escuelas públicas se expresaron mejor en determinados contenidos. Existe la necesidad de centrarse en el dominio del habla en la educación del idioma Inglés en Nepal, y que los enfoques pedagógicos deben adaptarse a las necesidades de los estudiantes de las escuelas públicas para ayudarlos a mejorar su dominio del habla del idioma inglés; también destaca la necesidad de programas de formación docente y el desarrollo de materiales didácticos relevantes para abordar los desafíos de enseñar habilidades orales en la educación este idioma en Nepal.

**Palabras claves:** Vocabulario, dominio del habla, gramática, contenido.

## BĪLA PRAHNIRA

Naha staditakanka bapanka ba sika marikaia bara prakikaikaia nahki pitka kat staditakra nani pablik bara aibapi skulka ra nani ba inglis bila pain aisisa sapa Nepal ra baku natkara sip kabia dia mā sakbia ba wina skul smalkanka dukiara wark nani daukaia. Yus munan stadi takaia natka kum nina muestreo intencional no aleatoria makiba 30 staditakra nani wahbisakaia dukiara 12° grado pablik skulka yumhpa bara aibapi skulka yumhpa Banke distrit ka wina. Sturka nani ba wahbisakan, bila aisanka lakikaikanka kum 12° grado bukka kum kuk, baku sin sturka nani ba lukilakikaikan ba método mixto makiba bilka kuk daukan sa. Mā sakanka nani ba tilara paramsakansa aibapi skul ka staditakra nani ba mihta pura luan sa pablik skulka nani ra gramatica ra, bila nani ra baku sin dia ulban aiska ba ra sin. Ban sakuna, staditakra aslatakanka wal sut ba trabil brin kan taim yamni ra yus munaia ba bila nani aisi pyuara. Aibapi skul ka tuktika nani ba sin kasak pain takan sa aisikaiki bila prukanka mapara bara isti pain aisaia mapara sin, ban sakuna pablik skul ka nani ba lika kau pain aisansa dia ulban aiska ba piska nani kum kum ra. Nepal ra ba nitka kum bar asa inglis bila kau aisaia mapara, baku sin smalkaia natka nani ba pablik skul ka staditakra nani nit ka ba wal daukaia sa baku lika sip kabia inglis bila kau tabaiki lan munaia dukiara; baku sin smasmalkra nani sinska kau karna daukaia prugram ka bꞌnani sin bri kaia sa bara nahki skul smalkaia natka bara matirial nani yus munaia ba dukiara baku mika sip kabia Nepal tawanka ra naha bila ra aisikaikaia smalkanka ba yabaia.

**Baksakan bila nani:** Bila nani, Bila yamni aisaia ba, Dia ulban aiska ba.

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## INTRODUCTION

The skill of speaking is considered to be of great importance among the four language skills in English. Students must possess a good proficiency in speaking, as it is crucial for developing effective communication skills. Students typically assess their language learning progress, as well



as the efficacy of their English, based on how much they believe they have improved in their speech skills. Speaking is a useful ability that combines pronunciation, vocabulary, syntax, and dialect. English is generally known as a lingua franca and an international language that is frequently used for conversation among users of various languages. Speaking is one of the most difficult skills to master in everyday life because it is essential for creating social relationships and getting information.

Speaking skills are regarded as an art form and one of the four useful skills required when studying a foreign language. Good speaking skills include the ability to produce words that the audience can readily understand. Speaking is regarded as the most important of the four language skills in conversation, and it works in tandem with hearing skills. In Nepal, English is taught as a foreign language in all government schools from Grade one to Masters Level, but in private schools, it is taught from nursery class. Usually, speaking skills are emphasized more than writing skills. Therefore, the communicative language learning method and task-based learning are used to teach language at the school and campus level. Nowadays, speaking or communicative functions are highly emphasized. Teachers must have a better understanding of this skill to train learners to speak the target language fluently and appropriately.

Speaking is given precedence over writing in assessing learners' proficiency in the target language because it is deemed more important for successful conversation. However, all four language abilities, hearing, speaking, reading, and writing, are interconnected, and mastery of each is required to be a well-rounded communicator. Nonetheless, the ability to put words together meaningfully to represent ideas, views, and emotions is regarded as a unique advantage of speaking ability. Dialogue, knowledge gap exercises, character play, pattern practice, and group discussion are all activities that can help you improve your speaking skills. The primary objective of language instruction, according to Krashen (1985), is to provide comprehensible input to aid acquisition, and a competent instructor is someone who can make input comprehensible to a non-native target language student. Speaking is the outcome of learning, not the source of it. It is generally agreed that speaking plays a significant role in language teaching, and the active participation of students in speaking is crucial for effective language learning. Therefore, it is essential to teach speaking skills to students. This research aims to compare the proficiency of speaking skills between public and private school students.

The importance of language in communication has been acknowledged since the beginning of human civilization. English language has become especially important in today's globalized world. However, in Nepal, the teaching of English language often neglects the development of speaking skills in learners. Classroom activities promoting speech should be an important component of language courses, but designing and administering such activities is challenging. Learners are often inhibited and struggle with making mistakes, feeling shy, or not knowing what to say. The study focuses on the problem of speaking proficiency, specifically comparing the proficiency in grammar, vocabulary, and content of students in public and private schools, as well as their existing level of English-speaking proficiency. This study aimed to determine and compare the English-speaking proficiency of students in public and private schools in Nepal and to propose pedagogical implications based on the findings.



The findings of this study can be used to improve speaking skills and benefit English language teachers by providing insight into promoting language skills and identifying students' speaking proficiency levels. Students can also benefit from the study by being able to identify their own speaking proficiency and working to improve it. This study is significant for those interested in teaching speaking skills but lack knowledge of different strategies to accommodate student interests and age levels. It is noteworthy because it identifies aspects of speaking, such as pronunciation, accuracy, fluency, and vocabulary, in which students may struggle and require necessary improvement.

This study is limited to the evaluation of the speaking proficiency of secondary level students in three public and three private schools located in the Banke district, Nepal. The sample size for this study was limited to thirty students. The assessment of speaking proficiency was based solely on the criteria of accuracy, content, and vocabulary. Speaking is defined as the process of communication for sharing information between the speaker and the listener. In order for the listener to understand the content of the information, the information sent by the speaker must be clear. This statement is supported by various theories. Speaking is also referred to as oral interaction, which is a conventional way of conveying information, expressing ideas, and communicating thoughts (Nunan, 1991, p. 40).

Speaking is an activity that involves using language to express meaning and deliver information from one person to another. The author concludes that speaking proficiency refers to the ability to effectively convey information, notions, or ideas from one person to another. Hadley (2001) defines competence as "a high level of skill, well-developed knowledge, or polished performance that requires effort and practice to achieve." English speaking proficiency is a crucial aspect of language since it is essential for communication and interaction. To speak fluently, one must possess not only language knowledge but also the ability to process information and language "on the spot" (Harmer, 2001).

Brown (2001) explains that the ACTFL (American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages) established guidelines for speaking proficiency in 1987, which are widely used in language teaching. The ACTFL guidelines categorize speaking proficiency into ten levels ranging from Novice Low to Superior. At the Intermediate-Low level, speakers can perform limited communicative tasks related to personal information, daily activities, and immediate needs. They can respond to direct questions and ask a few appropriate questions, but their conversation is restricted to concrete exchanges and predictable topics. They express their ideas by combining and recombining their knowledge and what they hear from their interlocutors.

Students must be able to make themselves heard, prevent confusion due to incorrect pronunciation, grammar, or vocabulary, and follow social and societal norms in order to achieve good speaking skills. It is an interactive process of constructing, processing, sharing, and negotiating meaning through verbal symbols. Indicators of good speaking proficiency include fluency, vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, and comprehension.

In formal language, speaking proficiency is defined as the ability to use language in a situational and contextual way to convey proper meaning. It involves considering different aspects such as stress, focus, and physical gesture. Nunan (1989, p.32) suggests various indicators of successful speaking proficiency including the ability to articulate phonological features of the language comprehensibly, mastery of stress, rhythm, and intonation patterns. He also added that acceptable fluency, transactional and interpersonal skills, turn-taking skills, interaction management skills, negotiating meaning skills, conversational listening skills, etc. Developing speaking proficiency is important for improving vocabulary, grammar, and content. Although speaking is not an easy activity, it is essential for communication with others.

In accordance with Harris (1969, p. 81), the skill of speaking is intricate, requiring the simultaneous utilization of various abilities such as pronunciation, comprehension, grammar, fluency, and vocabulary, which often progress at different rates. Likewise, Underhill (1987, p. 97) suggests that language proficiency, particularly in speaking, comprises various components such as grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation (including intonation and stress), fluency, and content.

Furthermore, Tarigan (2001, p.15) identifies three significant objectives of speaking, namely:

- a) Informing the listener about everything the speakers want or need and sharing their ideas.
- b) Entertaining the listener by discerning their feelings and knowing how to entertain them accordingly.
- c) Persuading someone else to engage in a specific activity through speech.

Successful speaking is achieved when the speaker utilizes good intonation and expression with minimal grammar and vocabulary errors, thereby avoiding misunderstandings. Consequently, it can be inferred that the key indicators of speaking proficiency are pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension.

Several studies have been conducted on speaking proficiency in Nepal. Pandey (2007) investigated the practical constraints and activities for teaching speaking in secondary level classrooms using observation, checklist and questionnaire as research tools. The study found that teaching speaking was challenging due to factors such as less time allotment, large class sizes, inhibition and lack of physical facilities. Timilsina (2008) studied the strategies employed in teaching speaking skills in public and private schools using interviews and observations. The research found that teachers in private schools were more conscious about teaching speaking skills. Aryal (2011) examined the speaking proficiency of grade eight students in public and private schools using a test as the main research tool. The study revealed that students in private schools had better speaking proficiency than those in public schools.

Jha (2011) aimed to determine how personality factors influence speaking ability, finding that introverts struggle with pronunciation, fluency, and accuracy while risk takers are more confident speakers. Paudel (2011) surveyed secondary school students in Kathmandu to determine their speaking proficiency and found that private school students were more proficient than their public school counterparts. Singh (2014) conducted a case study on the role of English medium schools

in enhancing speaking proficiency and found that students were careful with grammar in formal situations but made mistakes in informal situations. The studies used various data collection methods, including questionnaires and observation.

Building upon insights gleaned from prior research studies, the present investigation endeavors to ascertain the proficiency levels of students in private and public schools with respect to vocabulary, grammar, and content in their speaking ability. Specifically, this study seeks to identify and compare the gaps in speaking proficiency between these two groups of students. Given that speaking is a challenging task, it is hypothesized that private school students will have higher levels of speaking proficiency than their public school counterparts. Furthermore, the review of literature has provided valuable insights into the importance of speaking proficiency, the design and attainment of research objectives, and the measurement of student proficiency in speaking. The theoretical framework of this study has been developed through the synthesis of prior research, and the literature review has aided in expanding theoretical knowledge and providing conceptual clarity.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

Survey research design is used in this research which is also a common approach used in educational research, social inquiry, politics, and development studies. The steps involved in undertaking this survey research study included identifying the problem, specifying objectives, constructing a hypothesis, expanding theoretical knowledge, writing a research proposal, preparing research tools, piloting the research tools, conducting field visits, establishing rapport with authorities, requesting permission to conduct research, sampling informants, fixing the time for data collection, eliciting data, and analyzing, interpreting, and presenting data. This study targeted the entire population of secondary-level students in Banke district of Nepal. From this population, a sample of 30 students was chosen from three public and three private schools in Banke, Nepal using purposive non-random sampling techniques.

The primary instrument used for data collection was a set of test items. The test items were developed based on the speaking task outlined in the Grade Twelve textbook. A combination of primary and secondary sources for data collection was employed. The thirty grade 12 students from private and state secondary institutions in the Banke district served as the main data sources for this research. The researcher used various sources such as books, textbooks, journals, articles, and web pages related to research to facilitate the present study. Some of the sources include Khaniya (2005), Underhood (1969), Harris (1977), Nunan (1992), Brown (2001), Crystal (2003), internet, and approved thesis in the Department of English Education. In addition to these secondary sources, the researcher primarily used Our English Textbook of grade ten to evaluate speaking proficiency.

The researcher began by selecting three private and three public schools in the Banke district. After obtaining permission from the school authorities, they requested the English teacher's cooperation and conducted simple random sampling to select students. Each student was given one hour to answer questions from a speaking test paper. The data was collected and the speaking proficiency

of the selected secondary schools was compared with that of the private schools of the same grade. The analysis and interpretation of the collected data in this section were conducted using a mixed method analysis. The data was presented, analyzed, and interpreted

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This part is concerned with the analysis and interpretation of data gathered from high school students from both private and state institutions. The responses were compared, analyzed both descriptively and statistically, and interpreted based on the objectives of this study. The subsequent section provides a detailed account of the analysis and interpretation process.

To collect the necessary data and determine the speaking proficiency of public and private school students, I created test items related to speaking activities, comprising of pictures and questions. A total of thirty secondary level students from both public and private schools were selected and administered the test items. Based on the data collected, the results were derived and presented both descriptively and orthographically. The following section elucidates the details of the analysis and interpretation process.

### *A comprehensive evaluation of Speaking Proficiency*

To determine the speaking proficiency of students, a speaking test was conducted using pictures and questions as test items. Each response was assessed based on three language components: vocabulary, grammar, and content. The scores for each language component were marked out of 100 for each student response. The results of the speaking test have been presented holistically using tables.

*Table 1. Holistic Analysis*

S.N.	Item	Score (in total)	Average
1	Vocabulary	1249	41.63
2	Grammar	1029	34.30
3	Content	1630.50	54.35

Table 1 displays the aggregate scores attained by all pupils in three distinct linguistic categories. Post-examination analysis revealed that students from both private and public institutions demonstrated proficiency in content. The mean content score was 54.35, amounting to a total of 1630.50. Similarly, the pupils achieved a mean vocabulary score of 41.63, with a total of 1249 out of a possible 3000. However, grammar proved to be a weak point for learners in both types of institutions, as they only scored 1029, with the lowest mean score of 34.30. Hence, the study demonstrated that the majority of English language learners struggled with vocabulary and grammar, but exhibited an aptitude for expressing themselves in specific contexts.

### *Analysis of the speaking test on a school-wise basis*

The present study administered a speaking test to students from three public and three private schools in Banke district. Prior to conducting the test, the hypothesis was posited that the speaking

proficiency of students from private schools would surpass that of their public school counterparts. This assumption was largely corroborated by the results, as students from private schools exhibited superior performance across all language components. The scores obtained by students from both private and public schools are presented in tabular form, as derived from the aforementioned speaking test.

### *Analysis of speaking proficiency of private school students*

To gather data on speaking proficiency, pictures and questions were employed as stimuli. The resultant data was subjected to both qualitative and quantitative analysis. A sample population of 15 students from private schools was selected for the study, and their responses were evaluated across three distinct English language components.

*Table 2. Analysis of Private School's Students*

S.N	Item	Score (in total)	Average
1	Vocabulary	750	50
2	Grammar	574	38.27
3	Content	893	59.53

The data presented in the table suggests that students from private schools exhibited limited proficiency in vocabulary, with a total score of 750 out of a possible 1500 and an average score of 50. Although the use of some basic vocabulary was observed among the respondents, phrasal verbs and link-ups were absent from their discourse. Simple sentences utilizing active vocabulary were common, and while the usage of vocabulary was limited, the respondents were able to clearly express their intended message. Furthermore, the given vocabulary was employed appropriately. Similarly, students from private schools obtained a total score of 574 with an average of 38.27 in grammar, indicating that most of the respondents produced erroneous sentences. Tense mixing was a frequent occurrence, with present and past tenses often used interchangeably when discussing the same picture. Additionally, the utilization of model verbs, auxiliary verbs, and wh-words was not grammatically sound.

On the other hand, private school respondents demonstrated the highest proficiency in content, scoring a total of 893 with an average of 59.53. Despite their grammatical shortcomings, the students were able to articulate their thoughts effectively regarding the given content. They exhibited an intermediate level of English proficiency, with a familiarity of tense, active vocabulary, and conversational activities. However, their primary deficiency was the inability to utilize grammatically correct sentences. Notwithstanding, they achieved the aims of speaking, including the dissemination of information, entertainment, and persuasion.

### *Analysis of speaking proficiency of public school students*

In the private school context, a total of 15 students were selected to undergo the same test items.



Their speaking proficiency was evaluated across three key components: vocabulary, grammar, and content. The results of their scores in each of these areas are presented below.

*Table 3. Analysis of public school's students*

S.N.	Item	Score (in total)	Average
1	Vocabulary	499	33.26
2	Grammar	455	30.33
3	Content	737.5	49.16

In comparison to the private school students, the students from public schools scored lower in all categories of vocabulary, grammar, and content. Their vocabulary proficiency was poor with limited active vocabulary and improper use of conjunctions, phrasal verbs, and parts of speech. They also struggled with grammar, including difficulties with prepositions, subject-verb agreement, and tense mixing. Despite these challenges, they demonstrated good knowledge of greetings and farewells, and were able to convey the given content effectively. However, due to a lack of exposure and interaction with English speakers, they struggled to complete all the aims of speaking and often struggled to convey intended meanings.

### *Item Wise Analysis*

A grading point rank scale was used to categorize the speaking proficiency of 30 students who participated in the study, with 15 students from private schools and 15 from public schools. The scale consists of five grades, with Grade A representing students who scored 80% or more, Grade B representing students who scored 60% to 79%, Grade C representing students who scored 40% to 59%, Grade D representing students who scored 20% to 39%, and Grade E representing students who scored 0% to 19%. The table below provides a summary of the grading point rank scale.

*Table 4. Gradation Level*

Percentage	Grade
80-100	A (Excellent)
60-79	B (Good)
40-59	C (Average)
20-39	D (Below Average)
0-19	E (Poor)

Utilizing aforementioned point rank scale, the students were segmented into different grades based on their mean score and percentage. Furthermore, the students' speaking proficiency was evaluated by segregating the language into three categories, namely vocabulary, grammar, and content.

### *Proficiency in Vocabulary*

The students were provided with pictures and questions and their response was recorded. After marking their responses they were graded into different levels. The table below describes the proficiency of students (private and public schools' in vocabulary.

*Tabla 5. Score in Vocabulary*

Total no. of students	Grade	Students' percentage	Mean score
-	A	-	-
5	B	16.67	69.60
12	C	40	48.66
8	D	26.66	30.12
5	E	16.67	28.80

Table 5 presents the vocabulary marks of both private and public school students, with no student achieving a score of 80 or above. The majority of the students fell under grade C and D, with 12 and 8 students respectively, while only 5 students achieved grade B and E. The use of vocabulary of the students from public schools was found to be poor, with limited range and incorrect use of vocabulary. They had minimal use of conjunctions, phrasal verbs, and parts of speech. On the other hand, the private school students were more familiar with everyday English words and demonstrated better word use due to their exposure.

### *Proficiency in grammar*

The students' speaking ability was assessed through various test items, and their language proficiency was categorized into different sections, including grammar. The table below presents the students' proficiency levels in grammar.

*Table 6. Score in grammar*

Total no. of students	Grade	Students' percentage	Mean score
-	A	-	-
3	B	10.00	67
8	C	26.66	46.75
14	D	46.67	28
5	E	16.67	12.40

The study analyzed the grammar proficiency level of students from private and public schools in English language. The results showed that majority of the students had average or poor proficiency level. None of the students were able to achieve grade A in grammar item. Only 10% of them got grade B, while 26.66% got grade C and 46.67% got grade D. The rest of the students got grade E with the mean score of only 12.40. The students made various types of grammatical errors, including errors in the use of model verbs, auxiliary verbs, wh-words, and sentence structures. The students from public schools were found to have difficulties in using demonstrative pronouns, as well as in properly using present, past, and future tense in sentences. They also struggled with subject-verb agreement and the proper use of singular and plural subjects. It was concluded that the students from public schools lacked exposure to English language grammar, resulting in the production of grammatically erroneous sentences.

### *Proficiency in content*

The participants were given various prompts to speak about, and based on their ability to handle the content, they were assigned marks and grades. The results for the 30 students, consisting of both private and public school attendees, are as follows:

*Table 7. Score in content*

Total no. of students	Grade	Students' percentage	Mean score
5	A	16.67	88
8	B	26.67	67.37
14	C	46.67	45.96
3	D	10	26.66
-	E	-	-

Table 7 displays the marks and proficiency level of 30 participants from private and public schools under the content item of the English language. While many students performed well in this section, none of them received a grade of E. Five students (16.67%) received a grade of A with an average score of 88, and eight students (26.67%) received a grade of B with an average score of 67.37. Fourteen students (46.67%) received a grade of C with an average score of 45.96, and only three students (10%) received a grade of D with an average score of 26.66. During one speaking task, a student from public school provided directions to a stranger in English, but struggled with grammar and vocabulary, saying things like "I will said him to turn his left." Students from private schools generally performed better in this item, having more exposure to English speakers and being more familiar with grammar, vocabulary, and conversational activities. In contrast, students from public schools struggled with English due to a lack of interaction with English speakers and the use of their mother tongue in the classroom, leading to hesitancy and limited output. As a result, they often failed to achieve the aims of speaking, which are to inform, entertain, and persuade, and their sentences were not always informative, entertaining, or persuasive.

### *Comparison of Private and Public Schools' Students*

The research findings have indicated that students at the secondary level in both private and public schools exhibit inadequate proficiency in the use of English language, with students from private schools demonstrating marginally better performance compared to their public school counterparts. The speaking proficiency of these students was evaluated and compared under various headings, with the assistance of tables and illustrations.

### *Comparison in terms of Vocabulary*

Upon administering the test, it was revealed that a considerable number of participants did not demonstrate an adequate level of proficiency in utilizing vocabulary. Despite possessing knowledge of several vocabularies, their lexicon exhibited a limited range.

Table 8. Comparison in terms of vocabulary

No of students		Grade	Students' Percentage		Average	
Private School	Public School		Private School	Public School	Private school	Public school
		A				
4	1	B	26.67	6.67	70	68
8	4	C	53.33	26.67	48.35	49.25
2	6	D	13.33	40	33	28.16
1	4	E	6.67	26.67	17	14.75

In terms of vocabulary use, the students from public schools were found to have a limited range of vocabulary and often used the same words repeatedly. This resulted in unclear messages due to incorrect vocabulary usage. In contrast, the students from private schools had a better knowledge and usage of vocabulary, enabling them to clearly express their ideas. Only one student from public school scored above 60 in vocabulary, while four were average and the rest were below average or poor. In comparison, four students from private schools were good, eight were average, two were below average, and only one was poor. The use of link-ups, connectives, and parts of speech was also better among the students from private schools due to their regular exposure to English. Overall, the students from private schools had a better understanding and usage of vocabulary than those from public schools.

### Comparison in Terms of Grammar

The study revealed that grammar proficiency was a major area of weakness for the majority of students from both public and private schools. The collected data presents the age-wise proficiency level of the participants in the grammar item of the English language.

Table 9. Comparison in Terms of Grammar

No of students		Grade	Students' Percentage		Average	
Private school	Public school		Private School	Public School	Private school	Public school
		A				
2	1	B	13.33	6.67	67	67
5	3	C	33.33	20	48	44.66
6	8	D	40	53.33	29	27.25
2	3	E	13.33	20	13	12

The students of private schools exhibited better performance than the students of public schools in the use of grammar, although both groups made mistakes in the use of tense, subject-verb agreement, and sentence structure. The majority of sentences produced by the students of public schools were found to be full of errors, while none of the students from either group were graded as excellent in their use of grammar. Among the students of private schools, two were graded as good with a mean score of 67, while only one student from the public school achieved the same score. In contrast, five students from private schools were graded as average with an average score of 48.60, while three students from public schools achieved this level with a mean score of 44.66.



Six students were graded as below average with an average of 29.16 and two were poor from private schools. In comparison, eight students were graded below average with an average of 27.25 and three were poor with an average of 12 from public schools. The primary problem faced by the respondents from public schools was the use of tense, as they were found to mix present, past, and future tense structures in the same situations. Apart from tense, subject-verb agreement was also a major problem for these students, as they were often confused between singular and plural verbs, but they had satisfactory performance in sentence structure and were well familiar with the S+V+O pattern of English language. Conversely, the students of private schools were better at the use of tense, although they made some errors, while they performed better in subject-verb agreement and sentence structure due to their regular production of English sentences. In addition, the students from private schools exhibited better pronunciation and fluency compared to the students of public schools.

### *Comparison in Terms of Content*

The English language content question was found to be the most effectively answered item by students from both private and public institutions. Students from public institutions did well in the subject item as well.

*Table 10. Comparison in Terms of Content*

No of students		Grade	Students' Percentage		Average	
Private School	Public school		Private School	Public School	Private school	Public school
3	2	A	20	13.33	88	88
4	4	B	26.67	26.67	68	66.75
8	6	C	53.33	40	44.62	47.75
-	3	D	-	20	-	26.66
-	-	E	-	-	-	-

The students from both public and private schools were evaluated on their proficiency in the content item of the English language. It was found that the students of public schools performed relatively better in this category than in grammar and vocabulary. Despite having grammatical errors, they were able to express their feelings well on the given content. However, there were instances where their responses were misleading due to the errors in their sentences.

On the other hand, the respondents from private schools were found to be more competent in producing meaningful sentences on given situations, indicating their strong knowledge of content. Among the 15 students from private school, 3 were rated excellent with a mean score of 88, 4 were good with an average of 68, and the remaining 8 were rated average with a mean score of 44.52 in content proficiency. Comparatively, 2 of the 15 students from public school were rated excellent with a mean score of 88, 4 were good with an average of 66.75, 6 were average with a score of 47.75 in average, and the remaining 3 were rated below average with a mean score of 26.66.

Despite their comparatively superior success in the content item, students from private institutions were found to be stronger in achieving the goals of speaking. Private school students showed a



better ability to communicate themselves without errors, whereas public school students struggled more in this area.

This research aimed to assess and compare the speaking proficiency of students from both public and private schools. To achieve the research objectives, a purposive non-random sampling technique was utilized to select 30 students, comprising 15 students from private schools and 15 students from public schools in Banke district. The data was collected by administering a test consisting of speaking tasks. Upon analyzing and interpreting the data gathered through the test, the study yielded several findings pertaining to grammar, vocabulary, and content.

The findings regarding the use of grammar are as follows:

- i. Based on the analysis of the students' responses on the speaking test, it was found that most of the students were weak in the proper use of tense.
- ii. The respondents from private schools were not proficient in the use of grammar, as many of their responses were full of errors.
- iii. The students of public schools were found to be weak in the use of tense, as they tended to mix different tenses in the same speaking environment.
- iv. Although some of the sentences of public school students were correct, the majority of their sentences were full of errors.

In fact, almost every sentence of public school students was found to be grammatically incorrect.

v. The students of private schools performed better than those of public schools in terms of using tense.

The findings regarding vocabulary are as follows:

- i. The students from private schools performed better than those from public schools, although they also produced many incorrect sentences.
- ii. The students from private schools were far better in pronunciation and fluency than the students of public schools.

Regarding the content, the findings are:

- i. The respondents from private schools were good at content, and all of them were able to express themselves on the given content. This was the strongest aspect of the students from private schools.
- ii. The strongest aspect for the students of public schools was also content, as most of them were able to express themselves on the given content. However, they were sometimes misleading.
- iii. Grammatically, the students of public schools were overshadowed by the students of private schools. Almost every sentence produced by public school students was grammatically incorrect, although many sentences produced by private school students were also incorrect.
- iv. Students in public institutions performed well in terms of content because they were able to articulate themselves well. Private school pupils, on the other hand, outperformed them in terms of substance.

## CONCLUSIONS

Based on the analysis and interpretation of data, it can be concluded that the students of private schools showed better speaking skills compared to the students of public schools. However, even the students from private schools were not free of errors and were particularly weak in their grasp of English grammar and the use of tense. On the other hand, the students of public schools produced almost every sentence with grammatical errors, indicating significant deficiencies in their English language proficiency. The private school students, in contrast, demonstrated better pronunciation, fluency, and vocabulary, and were able to effectively inform, entertain, and persuade their listeners. However, some of the sentences produced by public school students were completely misleading.

Overall, these findings suggest that there is a clear need to improve the English language proficiency of students in both public and private schools. In particular, attention should be given to developing a more communicative learning environment and providing students with ample opportunities to practice speaking in English. Additionally, there is a need for more effective teaching strategies and curriculum development to address the deficiencies in grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation identified in this study. By addressing these areas of weakness, it is possible to improve the overall quality of English language education and better prepare students for success in the global marketplace.

Based on the aforementioned summary of findings, several recommendations have been formulated to be applicable in various areas related to the English language speaking domain. For the sake of clarity, these recommendations have been categorized into the following three levels:

### *Policy Related*

This degree of implementation has the ability to significantly alter the complete educational system. Based on the study's results, the following suggestions are made:

- Government policy makers should focus on preparing possible areas for the proper use of L2 grammar as there is a significant gap between students' performance and the expected use of L2 grammar.
- English courses should be made more communicative to provide students with ample opportunities to speak in L2 and improve their language proficiency.
- More communicative activities should be included in grade 12 textbooks to develop practical communicative skills.
- Teachers should be provided with opportunities to learn about recent trends and practices in ELT, including how to incorporate more communicative activities in ELT classes.
- To develop new speaking skills and use appropriate language, different speaking skill development activities, such as group discussions, role plays, and drama, should be included in the English language course.



### *Practice Related*

At this level, policies are put into practice in the classroom. The following recommendations are made based on the findings of this study:

- Public school students struggled with tense usage, so teachers should provide ample input on tense and give students plenty of opportunities for speaking practice.
- Although private school students performed better overall, they still made errors, so creating a communicative classroom environment is crucial.
- Pronunciation should be a focal point in both public and private school English language teaching classes.
- Students in both public and private schools should be taught how to persuade, inform, and entertain their listeners.
- Whenever possible, instructions in ELT classes should be given in the L2.

### *Further Research Related*

Scholars who want to delve deeper into this topic should consider the following suggestions:

- Conduct experimental studies on the effectiveness of speaking proficiency of public and private school students, as this research was a survey.
- Carry out research on other aspects of speaking proficiency that have not been explored yet, such as the challenges in speaking skill in ELT classes and the effectiveness of vocabulary, grammar, and content in developing speaking proficiency.
- This research is limited in scope, as it only covers data from 30 secondary level English language learners in the Banke district regarding speaking proficiency. Therefore, other researchers with wider scopes can conduct further studies, as it may not be generalized in all contexts.

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