

# Development of English in Marathi Speaking Children Attending English Medium Schools (Senior Kindergarten and Grade I)

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## Abstract

An increasing number of Marathi-speaking children attend English medium schools in Maharashtra, India. The developmental trend of English in these children is not studied according to the researcher's best knowledge. Studying this development is essential to understand the development of children with developmental disabilities. Hence, the study aimed to understand the development of English in Marathi-speaking children attending English medium schools in senior kindergarten and Grade I (5 to 7 years of age). Forty Marathi-speaking children attending English medium schools (Senior Kindergarten and Grade I) were included. 'Clinical Evaluation of Language Fundamentals Preschool 2nd Edition (CELF)' was used to assess children's language skills, and 'Development of Emergent Literacy-Questionnaire' was administered to study the relation between home literacy environment and language skills in English. A gender difference was present for Senior Kindergarten children but not for the children studying in Grade I. More than 65% of children had scores below the age equivalent scores across the subtests. A moderate positive correlation was found between all the subtests of CELF and the score on the emergent literacy questionnaire. In conclusion, there is an effect of gender on English language skills in kindergarten which is not present in Grade I. The competency in English in Marathi-speaking children appears to be low and moderately related to literacy exposure at home.

**Keywords:** English proficiency, home environment, literacy

## Introduction

Second Language Acquisition (SLA) refers to learning languages in addition to the native tongue. A second language can be acquired or learned. The distinction between acquiring and learning a language was made by Krashen (1981). Acquiring a language requires the child to participate in natural communication situations, whereas learning a language is a conscious effort where error corrections are present. Across Asian countries, and more so in India, the school language often differs from the language used at home. English is the chief language in the Indian education system today. With the growing importance of computers in every field, the English Language has received a further boost.

Interestingly, apart from the schooling and organized education systems prevalent in India, the competitive examination scenario also reflects the importance of English. Hence, parents generally regard English as a necessity for their children as they believe it opens up doors to a better future. When English is learned in school and not acquired in naturalistic environments, as is the trend observed in India, the age and stages of development might differ from when it is acquired as a first language. Hence it is important to study the proficiency of English in Indian children where it is not the first language.

## Aim of the Study

To study the development of English in Marathi-speaking children attending English medium schools in senior kindergarten and Grade I.

## Objectives

1. To study the effect of gender and grade on the development of English in boys and girls with a mother tongue Marathi, studying in senior kindergarten and Grade I in English medium schools.
2. To explore the relationship between competency in the English language and exposure to the Literacy Environment of children.

## Methodology

### Participants

The study included 40 typically developing children attending Senior Kindergarten and Grade I in schools with the medium of instruction as English and Marathi as their mother tongue. 10 boys and 10 girls were included in each of the two groups. None of the children had any motor or cognitive delays on screening using the checklist- Communication Developmental Eclectic Approach to

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Language Learning (Karanth, 2007). Both parents' minimum level of education was SSC (Grade X). Also, none of the children had any known disorders such as any syndrome, hearing impairment, visual impairment, intellectual impairment, cerebral palsy, or learning disability, or behavioral or psychological problems. Children at risk for academic difficulties [as assessed on Checklist for Screening Reading Difficulty (Joshi & Vanaja, 2016) or having a delay in speech and language development were also excluded from the study. The children whose parents consented to participate in the study were included after reading and understanding the participant information sheet.

### Procedure

The parents of the children were told about the study's purpose, advantages and needs. They were given the participant information sheet and asked to sign the consent form before participating in the study. Only those participants who fulfilled the inclusion and exclusion criteria and whose parents consented were included in the study. Ethical clearance for the study method was obtained from the Institutional ethical committee.

The data collection began with the administration of a pre-constructed case history proforma, which included the demographic data, number of languages spoken at home, working status of parents, literacy of level of parents, type of family (nuclear or joint), etc. Next, tools for the selection of participants were administered to all the children. Clinical Evaluation of Language Fundamentals Preschool 2nd edition (CELF) was the tool used for the assessment of English, which included the assessment of eleven subtests, including Sentence Structure, Word Structure, Expressive Vocabulary, Concepts & Following Directions, Recalling sentences, Basic Concepts, Word Class, Recalling Sentences in Context, Phonological Awareness, Descriptive Pragmatic Profile, and Pre-Literacy Rating Scale. Raw scores for each subtest per child were determined that were subjected to statistical analysis.

The home literacy environment has been found to influence the development of English in children when it is not the first language of the children (Jordan et al., 2014; Roberts, 2008). Therefore, the relationship between home literacy exposure and the development

of English was also explored. Development of an Emergent Literacy Questionnaire for Parents (Khurana & Rao, 2011) was used to determine the home literacy exposure. Clinician asked the questions mentioned in the questionnaire to the child's parents/caregiver. Scoring was done as per the instructions of the authors of the questionnaire. Finally, the total score for the questionnaire was calculated.

### Data Analysis

Shapiro Wilk's test of normality revealed that the data was not normally distributed. Hence non-parametric tests were used for statistical analysis of the data.

### Results

Effect of gender and grade on development of English in boys and girls with mother tongue Marathi, studying in senior kindergarten and Grade I in English medium schools.

The mean age of boys in senior kindergarten was 5.5 years and that of girls was 5.8 years. In grade, I the mean age of boys was 6.7 and that of girls was 6.6 years. 60 % of mothers and 65% of fathers had completed their graduation. More mothers (22.5%) than fathers (10%) had completed SSC but had not completed their graduation. More fathers had completed post-graduation (25%) than mothers (17.5%). Thus, fathers' education level appeared to be more than mothers' education level among the study participants. The working status of mothers has been reported to have a possible impact on children's language development. Hence information about the working status of the participants' mothers was taken. It was found that the majority of the mothers (87.5%) were not working. Information taken on the type of family (Joint and nuclear) revealed that 70% of the children belonged to a nuclear family, including parents and children with/ without a sibling/s. Descriptive analysis (*M*, *Mdn*, *SD* and range) and results of Mann Whitney U for Clinical Evaluation of Language Fundamentals for boys and girls studying in Senior Kindergarten and Grade 1 are given in Table 1.

**Table 1**

*Descriptive Statistics and Results of Mann Whitney U for Subtests of Clinical Evaluation of Language Fundamentals across Gender (Senior Kindergarten)*

Sub-tests	Boys				Girls				Results of Mann Whitney U test		
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Mdn</i>	Range	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Mdn</i>	Range	U	z	<i>p</i>
Senior kindergarten											
Sentence structure	12.4	4.69	15.0	9.04 – 15.76	16.78	1.85	17.00	15.35 – 18.20	21.0	2.25	.03
Word structure	8.30	2.00	8.0	6.87 – 9.73	13.89	2.14	14.00	12.24 – 15.54	3.50	3.55	.01
Expressive vocabulary	12.90	7.35	12.0	7.64 – 18.16	22.69	4.84	22.00	18.94- 26.39	12.5	2.84	.01
Concepts & following directions	11.20	4.73	12.5	7.81 – 14.59	17.11	.78	17.00	16.51 – 17.71	8.0	3.21	.01
Recalling sentences	10.70	5.35	10.0	6.87 – 14.53	14.78	5.28	13.00	10.71- 18.84	26.5	1.78	.07
Basic concepts	14.90	2.84	16.0	12.86 – 16.94	17	.86	17.00	16.33 – 17.67	24.5	2.02	.05
Word class	18.90	12.47	17.0	9.98 – 27.82	33.11	3.14	32	30.70- 35.52	13.0	2.63	.01
Recalling sentences in context	12.90	8.54	10.5	6.79- 19.01	22.11	2.08	21.00	20.51- 23.72	25.5	1.86	.06
Phonological awareness	15.20	3.99	14.0	12.34 – 18.06	20.00	2.29	19.00	18.24 – 21.76	16.5	2.56	.01

Sub-tests	Boys				Girls				Results of Mann Whitney U test		
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Mdn</i>	Range	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Mdn</i>	Range	U	<i>z</i>	<i>p</i>
Descriptive pragmatic profile	86.70	5.63	85.0	82.67 – 90.73	92.67	4.18	94.00	89.45 – 95.88	22.0	2.16	.04
Pre-literacy rating scale	92.20	1.31	92.0	91.26 – 93.14	94.44	2.12	96.00	92.81 – 96.08	19.0	2.43	.01
Grade 1											
Sentence structure	17.10	1.72	16.50	15.86 – 18.34	16.90	2.13	17.00	15.38 – 18.42	44.50	.42	.68
Word structure	12.60	5.91	12.50	8.37 – 16.83	12.30	3.62	12.50	9.71 – 14.89	48.00	.15	.91
Expressive vocabulary	20.20	12.68	23.00	11.13 – 29.27	17.30	9.52	19.00	10.49 – 24.11	41.5	.64	.52
Concepts & following direction	14.70	6.03	16.00	10.38 – 19.02	15.90	4.50	17.00	12.68 – 19.12	46.00	.30	.79
Recalling sentences	17.40	13.97	17.50	7.40 – 27.40	15.20	7.91	14.00	9.54 – 20.86	44.50	.41	.68
Basic concepts	15.90	2.37	17.00	14.20 – 17.60	15.90	1.85	17.00	14.57 – 17.23	43.00	.55	.63
Word class	27.00	15.09	34.50	16.20 – 37.80	32.60	9.84	35.50	25.56- 39.64	45.50	.34	.73
Recalling sentences in context	25.10	13.69	24.50	15.30 – 34.90	22.00	9.00	19.00	15.56 – 28.44	42.00	.61	.57
Phonological awareness	17.20	4.44	19.00	14.02- 20.38	18.20	3.55	20.00	15.66 – 20.74	45.50	.34	.73
Descriptive pragmatic profile	99.6	2.79	101.00	97.60- 101.60	100.40	2.06	101.00	98.98 – 101.88	44.00	.48	.68
Pre-literacy rating scale	98.70	3.68	100.00	96.07- 101.33	100.30	2.79	101.00	98.30 – 102.30	38.00	.93	.39

Table 1 indicates that in Senior Kindergarten, the mean and median scores for girls appeared to be better than those for boys across all the subtests of CELF. Also, the SD and range for boys were higher than for girls. The same is reflected in the results of Mann Whitney U. Results of Mann Whitney U test revealed that the difference in the scores of boys and girls in Senior Kindergarten in all subtests of CELF was statistically significant for all the subtests except for recalling sentences and recalling sentences in context. Thus, girls appeared to have better English language skills than boys in senior kindergarten. However, the skills of recalling sentences and sentences in context are similar for boys and girls. Among the children in Grade 1, the mean and median scores for boys and girls appeared to be similar for all the subtests of CELF.

However, the SD for boys was higher than that for girls. The range for boys and girls was similar. Results of the Mann-Whitney U test did not indicate a significant difference across gender for any of the subtests of CELF for children studying in Grade I.

Since a significant difference across gender was found in the English Language skills of children studying in senior kindergarten, the effect of grade (Senior Kindergarten and Grade I) on the development of English in typically developing Marathi-speaking children attending English medium schools were studied separately for boys and girls.

Descriptive analysis and results of Mann Whitney U for the results of all the subtests of CELF across grade for boys and girls is given in Table 2.

**Table 2**  
*Descriptive Statistics and Results of Mann Whitney U for Subtests of CELF across Grade*

Sub-tests	Senior kindergarten				Grade I				Results of Mann Whitney U test		
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Mdn</i>	Range	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Mdn</i>	Range	U	<i>z</i>	<i>p</i>
For boys											
Sentence structure	12.40	4.69	15	9.04 – 15.76	17.10	1.72	16.50	15.86 – 18.34	20.00	2.31	.02
Word structure	8.30	2.00	8	6.87 – 9.73	12.60	5.91	12.50	8.37 – 16.83	29.00	1.60	.12
Expressive vocabulary	12.90	7.35	12	7.64 – 18.16	20.20	12.68	23	11.13 – 29.27	33.00	1.29	.21
Concepts & following directions	11.2	4.73	12.50	7.81 - 14.59	14.70	6.03	16.00	10.38 – 19.02	28.50	1.64	.10
Recalling sentences	10.70	5.35	10	6.87 – 14.53	17.40	13.97	17.50	7.40 – 27.40	36.00	1.06	.31

Sub-tests	Senior kindergarten				Grade I				Results of Mann Whitney U test		
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Mdn</i>	Range	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Mdn</i>	Range	U	<i>z</i>	<i>p</i>
Basic concept	14.90	2.84	16	12.86 – 16.94	15.90	2.37	17	14.20 – 17.60	34.00	1.23	.24
Word class	18.90	12.47	17	9.98 – 27.82	27.00	15.09	34.50	16.20 – 37.80	30.00	1.51	.14
Recalling sentences in context	12.90	8.54	10.50	6.79 – 19.01	25.10	13.69	24.50	15.30 – 34.90	26.00	1.83	.07
Phonological awareness	15.20	3.99	14	12.34 – 18.06	17.20	4.44	19	14.02 – 20.38	39.50	.83	.41
Descriptive pragmatic profile	86.70	5.63	85	82.67 – 90.73	99.60	2.79	101.00	97.60 – 101.60	.01	3.82	.01
Pre-literacy rating scale	92.20	1.31	92	91.26 – 93.14	98.70	3.68	100.00	96.07 – 101.33	4.50	3.51	.01
For girls											
Sentence structure	16.78	1.85	17.00	15.35 – 18.20	16.90	2.13	17.00	15.38 – 18.42	46	.30	.80
Word structure	13.89	2.14	14.00	12.24 – 15.54	12.30	3.62	12.50	9.71 – 14.89	38.5	.87	.40
Expressive vocabulary	22.69	4.84	22.00	18.94 – 26.39	17.30	9.52	19.00	10.49 – 24.11	36	1.06	.31
Concepts & following directions	17.11	.78	17.00	16.51 – 17.71	15.90	4.50	17.00	12.68 – 19.12	46.5	.26	.80
Recalling sentences	14.78	5.28	13.00	10.71 – 18.84	15.20	7.91	14.00	9.54 – 20.86	49.5	.03	.10
Basic concepts	17	.86	17.00	16.33 – 17.67	15.90	1.85	17.00	14.57 – 17.23	35.5	1.23	.30
Word class	33.11	3.14	32	30.70 – 35.52	32.60	9.84	35.50	25.56 – 39.64	30	1.23	.24
Recalling sentences in context	22.11	2.08	21.00	20.51 – 23.72	22.00	9.00	19.00	15.56 – 28.44	42.5	.57	.57
Phonological awareness	20.00	2.29	19.00	18.24 – 21.76	18.20	3.55	20.00	15.66 – 20.74	40.5	.72	.48
Descriptive pragmatic profile	92.67	4.18	94.00	89.45 – 95.88	100.40	2.06	101.00	98.98 – 101.88	.01	3.83	.01
Pre-literacy rating scale	94.44	2.12	96.00	92.81 – 96.08	100.30	2.79	101.00	98.30 – 102.30	7.00	3.31	.01

Table 2 indicates that the mean and median scores for boys in Senior Kindergarten appear to be lesser than those for boys in Grade I, except for basic concepts and phonological awareness, where the scores appear to be similar. The *SD* and range for boys in Grade I is higher than in senior kindergarten except for sentence structure, basic concepts, phonological awareness, and descriptive pragmatic profile. The results of Mann Whitney U indicate that a significant improvement in scores among the boys of Grade I is present only for the Sentence Structure, Descriptive Pragmatic Profile and Pre-Literacy Rating Scale subtests. Thus, among the children with a mother tongue Marathi studying in English medium schools, the English language skills of boys in Senior kindergarten and grade I are similar except for the skills of Sentence Structure, Descriptive Pragmatic Profile and Pre-Literacy Rating Scale, which were better in Grade I than in Senior Kindergarten.

Among girls, the mean and median scores for girls in Senior Kindergarten and Grade I are almost the same across all the subtests of CELF except for the descriptive pragmatic profile and pre-literacy rating scale, where the score of girls in Grade I appears to be higher than the scores of girls studying in Senior kindergarten. The *SD* and range for girls in Grade I is higher than in senior kindergarten except for the descriptive pragmatic profile and pre-literacy rating scale. The results of Mann Whitney U indicate no significant improvement across any of the domains of CELF from Senior Kindergarten to Grade I in girls except for descriptive pragmatic profile and pre-literacy rating scale. Thus, the English Language skills of girls in Senior kindergarten and grade I are similar except for the skills of the Descriptive Pragmatic Profile and Pre-Literacy Rating Scale, which were better in Grade I than in Senior Kindergarten.

On comparing the raw scores of each child with the Subtest Age Equivalents Corresponding to CELF subtest raw scores on page no. 178 of the manual CELF, it was found that the performance of many children was below the expected score for their chronological age, as given in Table 3. The comparison could be made for the subtests of Sentence structure, Word structure, Expressive vocabulary, Concepts and following directions, Recalling sentences, Basic concepts, and Word class – receptive and expressive; but not for the subtests of Recalling sentences in context, Phonological awareness, Descriptive pragmatic profile, and Pre-literacy rating scale as the equivalent age scores have not been provided in the manual. As seen in Table 3 when the age equivalent was determined for the subtests for boys and girls of Senior kindergarten and Grade I, it was found that the percentage of children who performed below the age equivalent mean scores were as follows, for Sentence structure was 92.5% (*n* = 40), Word structure 100% (*n* = 40), Expressive vocabulary 97.5% (*n* = 40), Concepts and following directions 70% (*n* = 40), Recalling sentences 95% (*n* = 40), Basic concepts 87.5% (*n* = 40), Word class – receptive 67.5% (*n* = 40), and Word class – expressive 67.5% (*n* = 40). The percentage of children performing appropriately to their chronological age for Sentence structure was 7.5% (*n* = 40), Expressive vocabulary 2.5% (*n* = 40), Concepts and following directions 22.5% (*n* = 40), Recalling sentences 5% (*n* = 40), Basic concepts 12.5% (*n* = 40), Word class – receptive 27.5% (*n* = 40), Word class – expressive 15% (*n* = 40). The percentage of children performing better than chronological age was few, with 7.5% (*n* = 40) in Concepts and following directions, 5% (*n* = 40) in Word class – receptive and 17.5% (*n* = 40) in Word class – expressive. Thus, more than 65% of children who participated in the study had scores below the equivalent of their chronological age.

**Table 3**  
*Comparison of Raw Scores of each Participant with Mean Raw Scores Provided in Clinical Evaluation of Language Fundamentals*

Sub-test	Grade	Gender	Number of children performing below chronological age	Number of children performing appropriately to their chronological age	Number of children performing better than chronological age	Total number of children
Sentence structure	Senior	Boys	10	0	0	10
	kindergarten	Girls	8	2	0	10
	Grade I	Boys	10	0	0	10
		Girls	9	1	0	10
	Total		37	3	0	40
Word structure	Senior	Boys	10	0	0	10
	kindergarten	Girls	10	0	0	10
	Grade I	Boys	10	0	0	10
		Girls	10	0	0	10
	Total		40	0	0	40
Expressive vocabulary	Senior	Boys	10	0	0	10
	kindergarten	Girls	9	1	0	10
	Grade I	Boys	10	0	0	10
		Girls	10	0	0	10
	Total		39	1	0	40
Concepts and following direction	Senior	Boys	7	3	0	10
	kindergarten	Girls	4	3	3	10
	Grade I	Boys	9	1	0	10
		Girls	8	2	0	10
	Total		28	9	3	40
Recalling sentences	Senior	Boys	10	0	0	10
	kindergarten	Girls	10	0	0	10
	Grade I	Boys	8	2	0	10
		Girls	10	0	0	10
	Total		38	2	0	40
Basic concepts	Senior	Boys	10	0	0	10
	kindergarten	Girls	8	2	0	10
	Grade I	Boys	7	3	0	10
		Girls	10	0	0	10
	Total		35	5	0	40
Word class – receptive	Senior	Boys	10	0	0	10
	kindergarten	Girls	6	3	1	10
	Grade I	Boys	7	3	0	10
		Girls	4	5	1	10
	Total		27	11	2	40
Word class – expressive	Senior	Boys	7	0	3	10
	kindergarten	Girls	4	2	4	10
	Grade I	Boys	9	1	0	10
		Girls	7	3	0	10
	Total		27	6	7	40

Relation between competency in the English Language and exposure to the Literacy Environment of children. Kendall's tau-b correlation coefficient was used to study the relationship between

the raw scores obtained in each subtest of CELF and the total scores obtained in the Development of Emergent Literacy Questionnaire for Parents. Results are given in Table 4.

**Table 4**  
*Correlation between the Raw Scores Obtained Across the Subtests of Clinical Evaluation of Language Fundamentals Preschool- 2nd Edition and the Total Scores Obtained in Development of Emergent Literacy Questionnaire for Parents*

Subtests of CELF preschool 2nd edition	Correlation Co-efficient	p
Sentence structure	.58	<.001
Word structure	.59	<.001
Expressive vocabulary	.64	<.001
Concepts & following directions	.56	<.001
Recalling sentences	.58	<.001
Basic concepts	.54	<.001
Word class	.60	<.001
Recalling sentences in context	.63	<.001
Phonological awareness	.59	<.001
Descriptive pragmatic profile	.37	.004
Pre-literacy rating scale	.52	<.001

The results of Kendall's Tau b correlation indicate that all subtests of CELF (sentence structure, word structure, expressive vocabulary, concepts and following directions, basic concepts, word class, phonological awareness, and pre-literacy rating scale) had positive and statistically significant moderate

correlation with the total scores obtained in Development of Emergent Literacy Questionnaire for Parents. However, the relation was relatively weaker between the score on the Descriptive pragmatic profile and the Development of Emergent Literacy Questionnaire for Parents.

## Discussion

Results of the study indicated that girls studying in Senior kindergarten performed significantly better than boys for all the subtests of CELF (sentence structure, word structure, expressive vocabulary, concepts and following directions, basic concepts, word class, phonological awareness, descriptive pragmatic profile and pre-literacy rating scale) except for recalling sentences and recalling sentences in context. However, this difference between the performance of girls and boys was not present in Grade I. This indicates that although the English language competency of girls is better in the early years, the performance of the boys and girls is similar by Grade I, which is a grade where formal schooling begins. However, the ability to recall sentences and recall sentences in context was not found to be different even between kindergarten boys and girls. Thus, although linguistic proficiency in English varies between the boys and girls of kindergarten, skills related to short-term memory, which is required for recalling sentences, are not different. This needs to be explored in controlled studies. The difference across gender in kindergarten found in the present study is supported by studies in the literature (Barbu et al., 2015; Brandis & Henderson, 1970; Bornstein et al., 2004; Garai & Scheinfeld, 1968; Garvey & Hogan, 1973; Halverson & Waldrop, 1970; Jackson et al., 2014; Smith & Connolly, 1972; Wells, 1986). However, contradictory studies have also been reported in the literature where gender difference is not found (Hyde & Linn, 1988; Lonigan et al., 1998; Menyuk, 1963; O'Donnell et al., 1967; Shah, 2010; Shatz & Gelman, 1973; Maccoby & Jacklin, 1974; Winitz, 1959) various factors have been discussed in the literature for the differences found in the language development of boys and girls. Some of the factors implicated in these differences are hormones, differences in the structures of the brain, and environmental factors (Hoff et al., 2002; Wallschlaeger & Hendricks, 1997; Whitehouse et al., 2012).

A significant difference was found across the language development of boys and girls; hence the effect of the grade was studied separately for the boys and girls of kindergarten and Grade I. A significant improvement in word class, pragmatics, and pre-literacy skills from senior kindergarten to grade I was found in boys. However, for girls, an improvement was seen for the skills assessed on descriptive pragmatic profile and pre-literacy rating scale only, but not for word class as seen in boys. No significant improvement was seen for both boys and girls across the grades studied for the subtests of sentence structure, word structure, expressive vocabulary, concepts and following directions, recalling sentences, basic concepts, recalling sentences in context, and phonological awareness. Thus, the developmental trend seen in boys and girls from senior kindergarten to Grade I is almost the same; however, for sentence structure, a significant improvement is seen in boys but not in girls. Since the number of children was limited, the study needs to be conducted on a large population for the generalization of the findings.

Comparing the scores obtained by each child with the chronological age equivalent mean given in the manual, it was found that for the majority of the children in the study (more than 65%), the scores were below the age equivalent mean score. This form is found across all the subtests of CELF, which is developed for children with English as their first language. Similar findings have been reported in the literature (Uccelli & Páez, 2007). Thus, children studying in Marathi medium schools with English as a medium of instruction appear to perform poorer than monolingual English-speaking children when their language skills are assessed on CELF. However, the number of children in the study was only 40. Hence, the study must be conducted on a large population to generalize the findings.

Most studies in the literature have included both boys and girls to study the effect of grade or age on the development of language and related skills. Significant development of pragmatic skills has been reported in English in monolinguals (Westby et al., 1984) and in English in Spanish-speaking children who were bilinguals (Uccelli & Páez, 2007). Similar results were obtained in a study conducted by Jackson et al. (2014) on the performance of Spanish-English kindergarten children of low socioeconomic status. Significant growth in the English language learners (ELL's)

receptive vocabulary was observed between preschool and 2nd grade. In addition, studies in literature have reported a significant difference in the performance of phonological awareness tasks in English in children attending kindergarten and Grade I, where English is not the first language of the children but a language that is learned for education (Bialystok et al., 2003; Shah, 2010; Wanknis et al., 2017). However, the same was not found in the present study, as the difference across grades (Kindergarten and Grade I) was insignificant for both sexes.

The present study found a significant positive moderate correlation between each of the scores obtained in CELF subtests except for the descriptive pragmatic profile, which has a weak correlation with the total scores of the Development of Emergent literacy questionnaire which indicates that competency in the English Language except for descriptive pragmatic skills improves with more exposure to English Language literacy at home. This is supportive of some studies in the literature (Fitzgerald et al., 1991; Jordan et al., 2014; Roberts, 2008). Features of the home environment have been found to relate positively to the early emergence of literacy, leading to better language skills in children (Kastler et al., 1987; Morrow, 1988). Children's literacy environment is improved by various activities like reading newspapers and children's books by parents/ caregivers, certain experiences and events like watching the adults at home read and write and interactions like bedtime story reading. In literature, we find factors such as the socioeconomic status of parents/ caregivers, frequent reading of storybooks at home in the primary language and English, and experiences and events at home like watching the parents read or write to influence children's language skills. Pragmatics does not seem to be affected by children's home literacy environment. Pragmatics includes verbal and non-verbal skills. It is not found to be restricted to a particular language but is the overall use of language. Therefore, as found in the present study, pragmatics does not seem to be affected by the literacy environment at home.

## Conclusion

Children with a mother tongue Marathi but studying in schools where the medium of instruction is English appear to have lesser English proficiency than the western population. The competency in the English language is influenced by the gender of the child (in senior kindergarten, but not in Grade I) and exposure to English literacy activities at home. Hence, home literacy activities in English need to be encouraged for better proficiency in English in Marathi speaking children attending English medium schools.

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