



Journal of Frontiers in Multidisciplinary Research

An Analysis of English Language Proficiency Levels

Nivedita Lahkar

MA Ph.D., Bezera Anchalik College, Bezera, Assam, India

* Corresponding Author: **Nivedita Lahkar**

Article Info

E-ISSN: 3050-9726

P-ISSN: 3050-9718

Impact Factor (RSIF): 8.10

Volume: 07

Issue: 01

Received: 04-12-2025

Accepted: 05-01-2026

Published: 08-02-2026

Page No: 132-135

Abstract

In various aspects of our life language plays a vital role and always influences our relationship, education, and our communication and professional activities. Language proficiency is not only the capability to write and speak; it includes diverse skills encompassing (a) *Speaking*, (b) *Listening*, (c) *Writing* and (d) *Reading*. Language skills enable individuals to communicate precisely and be comprehended by others. This paper will try to examine only the 'English speaking skill' among the Assamese medium higher secondary students of Kamrup (R) District of Assam.

Keywords: Skill, Avoidance, Filler, Assamese etc

1. Introduction

For academic achievement language skills are fundamental in the domain of education. Speaking skill enables one to convey one's thoughts precisely to others. In developing speaking, skill group and pair work are most helpful. Most effective speaking should be interactive and simple. Efficient listening skill is very helpful in conveying message and communication since it allows communication to be understood accurately, promotes mutual respect among people and increases the value of relationships. For absorbing ideas and information from articles, textbooks and other study materials reading skill is essential. Writing skill is important for transmitting ideas in research papers, essays, and other documents and assignments. Effective language skills can contribute to developing presentations, strong oral communication and discussion in the classroom environment. Students with good knowledge in language can articulate their thoughts and feelings with precision. Most of the Assamese medium students of Kamrup (R) district are not exposed to good English medium schools due to their poor economic conditions. As a result, most of the students are admitted in government schools and their English language skills remain poor.

1.1. Who are the Assamese?

The Assamese are one of the major indigenous languages of Assam which comes under the Eastern Indo-Aryan group of languages. They are located in every districts of Assam with slight phonological and syntactic variants. Assamese is the language as well as the community. Sarma and Sarma (2014)^[3] had mentioned that "The Assamese language grew out of Sanskrit, the ancient language of the Indian subcontinent. However, its vocabulary, phonology, and grammar have substantially been influenced by the original inhabitants of Assam such as the Bodos and the Kacharis." (p78). It has close affinity with Bengali and Odia languages. They are also known as Asamiya and it has many dialects like Eastern dialect, Central dialect, Kamrupi dialect and Goalpariya dialect. According to the (2011) *Census of India*, the total population of Assamese speakers was 1,53,11,351. The Assamese settlements are also noticed in the state of Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Nagaland and some parts of Odisha. Most of the Assamese speakers are bilingual and besides their mother tongue they can also speak Hindi and English to some extent. Assamese is the lingua-franca of the state. *Bihu* is a major festival of the Assamese. It is celebrated every year in the month of April (Bohag Bihu), January (Magh Bihu) and October (Kati Bihu).

1.2. Methodology

For the present work the data has been collected from the six (6) higher secondary schools of Kamrup (R) district of Assam where forty higher secondary students were taken randomly for data collection where both male and female students were concentrated. A set of self-questionnaires were prepared by the researcher where Speaking skill is analyzed. In some cases, direct communication was also made with them to test their English fluency and accuracy. Besides interview methods the observation method was also followed to fill up the gap in the corpus.

Objective

The main objective of this paper is to analysis the language skill i.e. speaking skill of Assamese students of class XII, of Kamrup (R) district of Assam. In the present paper the researcher will focus on: (i) syntactic avoidance, (ii) filler, (iii) vowel lengthening, (iv) vowel insertion etc.

1.3. Review of Literature

On the basis of review of literature, some notable works on Language skills are:

Koneru, Aruna (2011) ^[1], *English Language Skills*. In his book he has pointed out that “almost universally expressed needs of a learner in the 21st century are enrichment of vocabulary, correct pronunciation and acquisition of language skills namely listening, speaking, reading and writing.” (p1). He further mentioned that “good and strong knowledge of language and constant practice of different language skills help in raising the capability of learners.” (p1).

Sadiku, Manaj Lorena. (2015) ^[4]. “The Importance of Four Skills Reading, Speaking, Writing, listening in a Lesson Hour” In his paper he has mentioned that “For the teaching of English to be successful, the four skills, reading, listening, speaking and writing, should be integrated in an effective way. These skills should be addressed in a way that helps students meet the standards you set for them and develop their communicative competence gradually.” (p 29). Although there are plenty of works on language Skills, none of the works have shown any resemblance with the present topic. Hence the study has been proposed to work on the Rongmei Naga language speaking skill.

Sarma and Sarma. (2014) ^[3]. “Sounds of Assamese Language” In their paper they have mentioned that Assamese has eight (8) vowels i.e. /i/, /e/, /ɛ/, /a/, /ɔ/, /o/ and /u/ and eleven (11) diphthongs and these are: /ei/, /iu/, /ia/, /ui/, /ou/, /ua/, /oi/, /eu/, /ɛa/, /ɔi/, /ɔu/, /ai/ and /au/ with their occurrences and distributions are mentioned in their paper. They further pointed out that 24 (twenty four) consonant phonemes are also existed in sound system of Assamese and these are /m/, /n/, /ŋ/, /p/, /b/, /t/, /d/, /k/, /g/, /p^h/, /b^h/, /t^h/, /d^h/, /k^h/, /g^h/, /s/, /z/, /x/, /h/, /j/, /ɹ/, /l/ and /w/.

2. Language Skills Classification

Language skills serve many significant purposes in ESL classrooms, it makes students more competent, knowledge of grammar, vocabulary, thoughts can be exchanged and well understood, emotions, feelings, happiness and most significantly, confidence. Language skills can be can be divided into following types:

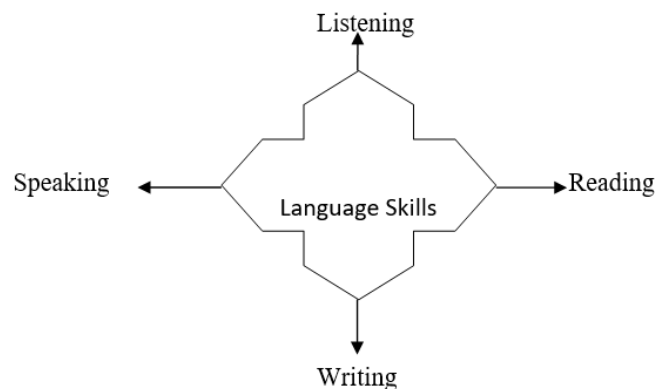


Fig 1:

The (4) four fundamental language skills i.e., (a) *Listening*, (b) *Speaking*, (c) *Reading* and (d) *Writing* have been further

classified into two parts by Husian (2015) which can be seen in the following figure:

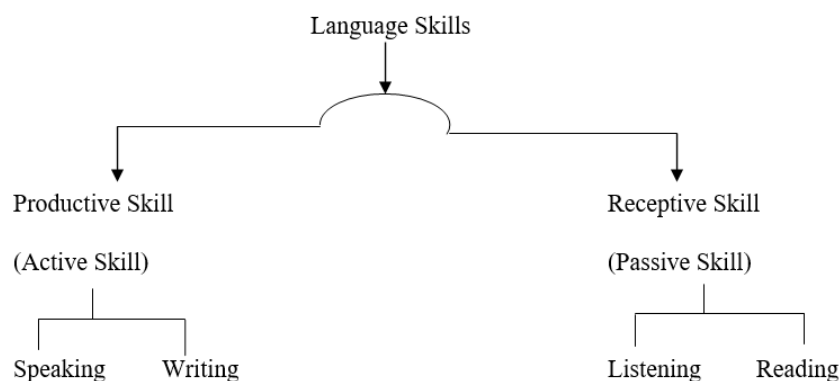


Fig 2:

2.1. Speaking Skill

The first and foremost form of communication is our speech; it captures a leading place in motivating and enlightening people's minds. Rather than writing, our information is easily communicated or understood through speech. Geologically speaking is the greatest gift of God upon human beings. Speaking is extraordinary and more special than other skills. When someone has heard thought, written ideas and read words, all someone needs is to articulate and express his/her speech or speaking skill. Speaking is very essential and useful in public, academic frameworks, trade and business, law and many other domains.

2.1.1. Data Analysis of Assamese Speaking Skill

In this section the researcher has tried to analyze the speaking strategies of Assamese communicative behavior and here most of the selected Assamese L₂ learners are concentrated. Assamese students are not very much exposed to good English medium schools. In most of their habitants' areas Assamese medium schools are there where Assamese is predominately used in communication in schools and in informal environments, as a result of it, Assamese students are much better in their native communication and have difficulties in speaking English. So, the key idea of this section is to test and identify the learners' speech strategies.

2.1.1.1. Speaking Test

2.1.1.1.2. Avoidance

It has been noticed by the researcher that most of the Assamese speakers are reluctant to speak in English with the researcher. The main reason for their avoidance is that they do not want to present their incapability or inadequacy of speaking to others.

2.1.1.1.3. Syntactic Avoidance

To hide learners' linguistic inadequacy syntactic avoidance is mostly adapted upon questioning. Mostly students were responding in short manner either with yes no or answered in one word instead of giving complete answer of asked questions as can be seen in the given examples:

Rich.....

In reply to

What would you do if you become a Mukesh Ambani?

Serve poor

In reply to

What would you do if you become a Minister?

The above discussion took place between the learners and researcher during data collection. The Assamese students were asked to respond elaborately in the questionnaire before sharing the questions. Instead of giving detailed answers, students' responses were in indirect form. For instance, most of the students have replied 'happy' to the asked question: what will you do if you become Mukesh Ambani? The question expects a response itself in complex sentences. For example, if I become Mukesh Ambani, I will be rich etc. The response was expected in a complex sentence consisting of two clauses, i.e. a *main clause* and a *dependent clause*. Students expressed the core of the meaning using the word "rich" without repeating the sentence.

2.1.1.1.4. Fillers

It is observed by the researcher that students often use filler to hide their internal thought process taking place in their inner mind. The filler is a type of expression like *mmm*,

aaaahah which literary does not carry any meaning. These are used while speaking so that they can take time to establish the word they are searching for in their inner mind. Sometimes *na* is also used in sentence final position to create more emphasis in a sentence. These can be well analyzed in the following sentences.

I wanted to go there *aahhhaa* but due to heavy rain I could not go.

mmm... I spend my leisure time in my welfare of my pet animals ... *mmm...* pet animals.

I will do well in my exam but my English is poor *na*

You are coming *na*

The above examples indicate that students tried to communicate something in English fluently due their difficulties in English communication; they often use *aaaahaha mmm* and continue their speech. The *na* particle is also used by the speaker during conversation and it is used in the clause final position. The *na* particle is mostly used to make the sentence more affirmative and emphatic.

2.1.1.1. 5. Inter Lingual Transfer Strategy

It is also noticed by the researcher that the inter-lingual transfer strategy is used by the Assamese speakers whenever they encounter differences between L₁ and L₂. The following approaches are seen in the speech interaction of learners due to phonological dissimilarities.

1. Phoneme replacement
2. Lengthening of vowels
3. Vowel insertion

2.1.1.1.5.1. Phoneme replacement

In Assamese, the labiodental [f] fricative is not present. So, Assamese speakers substitute bilabial aspirated stop sound [p^h] in the place of [f] sound as in

[p ^h is]	for	[fɪʃ]	'fish'
[p ^h i:d]	for	[fi:d]	'feed'
[p ^h lai]	for	[flaɪ]	'fly'

This sort of phonetic shifting strategy arises due to phonemic and allophonic dissimilarities between L₁ and L₂.

2.1.1.1.5.2. Vowel Lengthening

Vowel lengthening is another tendency among the Assamese students of Assam. In some cases, it is observed that vowels like /i/, /ɒ/ and /o/ are articulated by vowels lengthening as no high unrounded glide sound is noticed in Assamese.

Examples:

/i/ lengthening

[zi:p] **for** [dʒip] 'jeep'

[puli:s] **for** [pəlis] 'police'

Words with spelling /ə/

[kɛv:r] **for** [keər] 'care'

Words with spelling /o/

[ro:d] **for** [roud] 'Road'

2.1.1.1.5.3. Vowel Insertion

Addition of close front /i/ vowel sound in the beginning of syllable or an intended word without changing the meaning or rest of the structure is also noticed in the following examples:

[iskul] **for** [sku:l] 'school'

[istail] **for** [stail] 'style'

/iskutər/ **for** [sku:tə] 'scooter'

3. Conclusion

To conclude it can be said that when Assamese students feel that they are incorrect in their speech they reduce their voice. This voice reduction entails that they are lacking confidence in English. The code-switching tactic is also noticed among the students when they find difficulties in their speech some L₁ words are used in place of English. The same case is also noticed in many other dialects of Assamese. The inter-lingual strategies are Phoneme replacement, lengthening of vowels, syntactic avoidance, fillers, and insertion of vowels at the words initial are also noticed in their speech.

3.1. Suggestions

1. To enable students to speak English more in a formal (School, college etc) and informal (like talking with other Non- Assamese friends, in home, in meetings, in church etc) environment.
2. There must be proper facilities for teachers. All the teaching aids like blackboard, space, books etc must be available to them.
3. The government should encourage more and more research programmes, workshops on ELT, Communicative English programme etc should be financed liberally.
4. Good and competent English teacher must be appointed.

Abbreviations and Symbols

ELT	English language Teaching.
ESL	English as a second language.
L ₁	First language
L2	Second or target language
:	Vowel length
[]	phonetic transcription
//	phonemic transcription
/ʊ/	close back unrounded
/ɒ/	Low back vowel
/dʒ/	palatal affricate
/p ^h /	Aspirated stop
/ɾ/	alveolar tap
/p ^h /	aspirated stop

References

1. Koneru A. English language skills. New Delhi: Tata McGraw-Hill Education; 2011.
2. Office of the Registrar General, India. Census of India 2001. Series 1-India (Language, Indian states and union territories) Table C-16. New Delhi: Office of the Registrar General, India; 2001.
3. Sarma M, Sarma KK. Sounds of Assamese language. In: Kacprzyk J, editor. Studies in computational intelligence. New Delhi: Springer India; 2014. p. 77-93.
4. Sadiku ML. The importance of four skills reading, speaking, writing, listening in a lesson hour. European Journal of Language and Literature Studies. 2015 Apr;1.

How to Cite This Article

Nivedita Lahkar. An analysis of English language proficiency levels. Journal of Frontiers in Multidisciplinary Research. 2026;7(1):132-135.

Creative Commons (CC) License

This is an open access journal, and articles are distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution Non-Commercial Share Alike 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0) License, which allows others to remix, tweak, and build upon the work non-commercially, as long as appropriate credit is given and the new creations are licensed under the identical terms.