



**USE OF ENGLISH IN VARIOUS SOCIAL DOMAINS VIZ-A-VIZ  
DEVELOPMENT OF PROFICIENCY IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE: A  
STUDY OF FUNCTIONAL ENGLISH AND GENERAL ENGLISH  
STUDENTS AT HIGHER SECONDARY LEVEL IN SRINAGAR**

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**Abstract:**

English has long been the international language and globalization has made it more important than ever. In the era of information technology communication skills particularly in English assume vital significance and the concept of globalization of education makes it all the more important to develop a practical feel of a language. As a result of this increasing interest, Language use inside or outside the classroom works as a stimulus for many students when it comes to the learning of English. There is a consensus of opinion among language learning theorists and practising language teachers that, in L2 learning, the amount of practice that a learner is willing to put in is crucial in determining success. Language is learned through use in that the learner must be actively involved in trying to communicate in real situations; rich experience of the language is essential (Ingram 1978). Politzer (1965) would sufficiently support this claim that irrespective of the teaching methods used, language learning needs a tremendous amount of practice and perseverance. He also believed that whatever the disadvantage of lower language aptitude may be, it can be overcome by sufficient use of target language in day-to-day activities. Keeping in view the above discussion, the present study will evaluate the language use in various domains with respect to learner's overall language performance. The findings of the study revealed that those students who use English language in their day to day life score better in terms of their language skills.

**1. Introduction:**

English has been gaining greater importance for global communication. It is no longer a library language but a language of opportunities. A fairly high degree of proficiency in English and excellent communication skills enhance students employability. Moreover it is used as a means of self-expression in real life situations and also as a tool for pursuing higher studies. However it has often been realized that many students in the developing countries remain deficient in their ability to communicate in the spoken and written mode although they have received several years of formal teaching of English (Widdowson, 1972: 15). Thus Communicative language teaching (CLT) is an approach to the teaching of second and foreign languages that emphasizes interaction as both the means and the ultimate goal of learning a language. It is believed that we learn language most effectively by using it in realistic situations (Nunan 1989:13). It is also believed that if a learner uses English in day to day life ultimately his proficiency in English Language will be enhanced. The present study is based on the following assumption that those students who use English frequently with teachers, friends, family members and others (neighbours, develop greater proficiency in English. The sample for this study was taken from various higher secondary institutes of Srinagar city. It comprised of a total number of 160 respondents from which 80 belonged to General English course and 80 belonged to Functional English course. A questionnaire was prepared which consisted of two parts. Part one was designed to elicit personal information about the student which included items such as student's background, their schooling at high school level (govt. Private, missionary), economic background, educational qualifications of their parents and so on. The other part was prepared for the elicitation of linguistic data which was designed to test the student's knowledge of all the four language skills, namely reading, writing, speaking and listening. After collecting the data from a survey instrument, the data was codified and then quantified. The quantitative data was captured in a software program called Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 14.0 for its final analysis and tabulation purposes. This paper attempts to explore the proficiency acquired as a result of use of English language in various domains.

**2. Methodology:**

Methodology plays a very important role in any kind of research. In the present study, the linguistic data was collected by survey method. The sample for this study covered higher secondary institutions of Srinagar city where both Functional English and General English were taught. The sample comprised of a total number of 160 respondents from which 80 belonged to General English course and 80 belonged to Functional English course. They were selected randomly with different educational and socio-economic background. The sample was divided into 4 groups i.e. 11th Functional English, 11th General English, 12th Functional English and 12th General English. 40 respondents were taken from each group. For the present study equal number of male and female respondents was taken.

Table 1: Sampling

	Male	Female	Total
Functional English	40	40	80
General English	40	40	80

A questionnaire was designed to collect data for the proposed work. The questionnaire consisted of two parts. Part one was designed to elicit personal information about the student which included items such as student's background, their schooling at high school level (govt. Private, missionary), economic background, educational qualifications of their parents, exposure to English language and so on. The other part was prepared for elicitation of linguistic data which was designed to test the student's knowledge of all the four language skills, namely reading, writing, speaking and listening.

All four skills were graded on a scale of 0 to 5. A score of 0 means no response, likewise a score of 1 means that the student is very weak in English. A score of 5 shows that the student possesses excellent English language skills. An average student shows score of 2 to 3 in the test.

For the present work, four separate schedules (each one for each skill) were prepared and the students were tried out in the field through a pilot study. Based on the results drawn through the pilot study, the questionnaires were modified and finalized. The finalized questionnaire was used for data collection. The collected data was analyzed and interpreted with the help of percentages (%) and mean scores using SPSS.14. The data along with its analysis presented in the form of tables and figures. The responses of the questionnaire were coded into scores showing the extent and measure of their English language use. It was observed that there exists a significant relationship between the degree of English language use and performance in English language.

### 3. Analysis and Interpretation:

English being an international language occupies a prominent place in our society. Having good communication skills in English has become extremely important in one's personal and professional life. The better communication skills we have, the more effective we can be in our transactions. So respondents were asked questions about the use of English language in different domains. The analysis of the data showed some interesting results with regard to the relationship of use of English in day-to-day communication and proficiency in English language.

#### 3.1 Use of English with Teachers and Friends:

A study carried out by Lambert et al. (cited in Kennedy 1973) indicated that using the target language as a medium of instruction increased proficiency in the language. Chesterfield et al. (1983), observed that in classrooms where English-preferring children (i.e. those who speak English most of the time) predominated, those children who used relatively more English with peers and teachers showed the greatest increase in English proficiency. The finding served to imply that learners who were highly exposed to the TL and who took this opportunity to interact in the language were more successful in attaining proficiency. And the teachers and peers were the sources for exposure to the TL and, in turn, for increasing proficiency.

##### 3.1 (a) Use of English with Teachers:

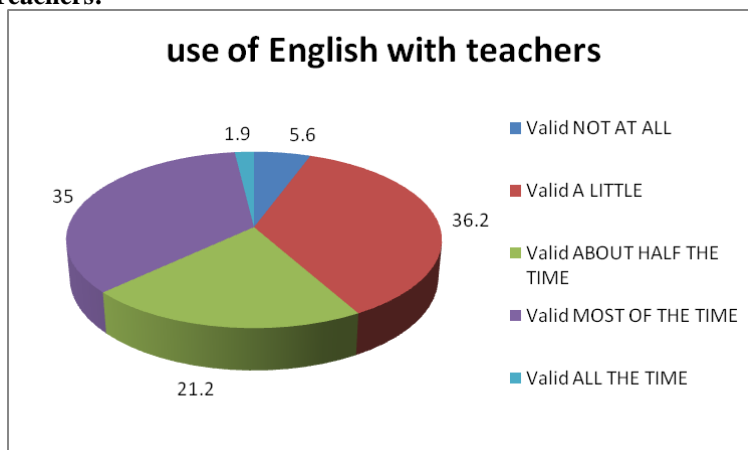


Figure 1: Use of English with Teachers

On asking about use of English with their teachers, the finding of the research work shows that only 1.9% of respondents use English all the time with the teachers, 35% of respondents use it most of the time, 21.2% of respondents use it half of the time and 5.6% of respondents never used English with their teachers. So the overall percentage of usage of English with teachers is fairly good.

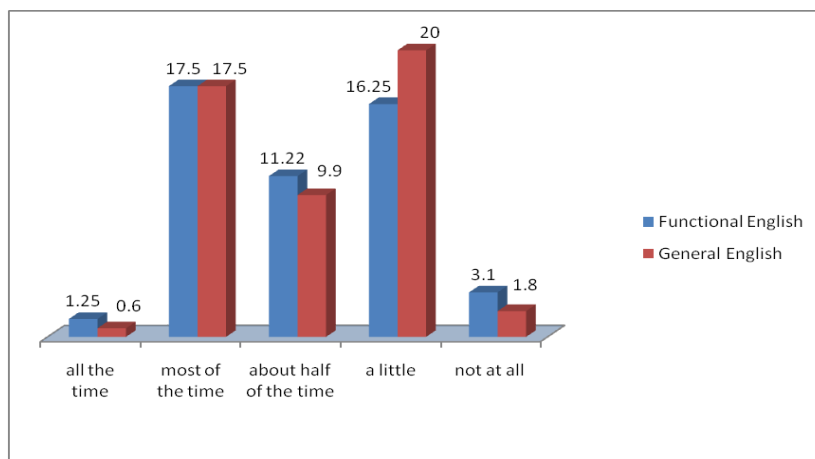


Figure 2

Figure 2 shows the percentage break-up with respect to Functional English respondents and General English respondents. It was observed that Functional English students claimed that they use English with their teachers more often than General English students.

Table 2: Mean scores showing use of English with Teachers in both Functional English and General English students.

	Stream																			
	With Functional English									Only General English										
	Use of English with Teachers									Use of English with Teachers										
	All the time		Most of the time		About half the time		A little		Not at all		All the time		Most of the time		About half the time		A little		Not at all	
	Me an	Std Dev iation	Mea n	Std Devi ation	Me an	Std Dev iation	Me an	Std Devi ation	Me an	Std De viation	Me an	Std De viation	Mean	Std Devi ation	Me an	Std Dev iation	Me an	Std Devi ation	Me an	Std Dev iation
Writing Skill	3.33	.92	3.12	.83	3.05	.83	3.01	.58	2.51	.51	3.24	.52	3.00	.79	2.80	.76	2.68	1.22	2.22	.63
Reading Skill	3.67	.89	3.55	.91	3.41	.87	3.00	1.00	2.92	.62	3.43	.61	3.38	.67	3.23	.53	2.90	.45	2.68	.54
Listening Skill	2.93	1.09	2.57	1.08	2.44	.88	2.33	.58	2.11	.12	2.57	.95	2.31	.92	2.27	.53	2.00	1.00	2.24	.11
Speaking Skill	2.98	1.01	2.74	.94	2.56	.88	2.33	1.15	2.14	.15	2.86	.69	2.56	.76	2.36	.90	2.23	.84	2.36	.130

The above table indicates that respondents who use English with their teachers all the time have better language skills than those who never use English with their teachers. It is also clear from the above table that mean scores of all four skills shows increase from lower range( not at all) to top range (all the time) on a 5 point scale. It is because of the fact that students who use English with their teachers attributes to higher English proficiency. However the mean scores are higher in functional English students.

3.1 (b) Use of English with Friends:

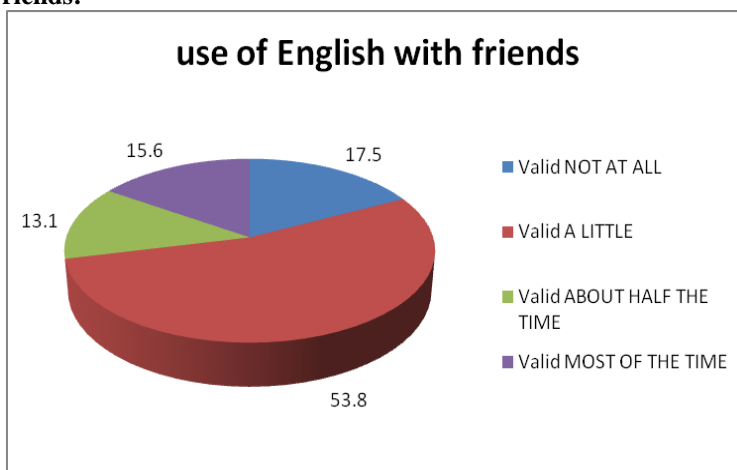


Figure 3: Use of English with Friends

Similarly, when the respondents were asked about the use of English with their friends, 15.6% of respondents claimed that they use English most of the time with their friends, 13.1% claimed to use it about half of the time and 53.8% use little English with their friends. 17.5% of respondents are those who have never used English with their friends.

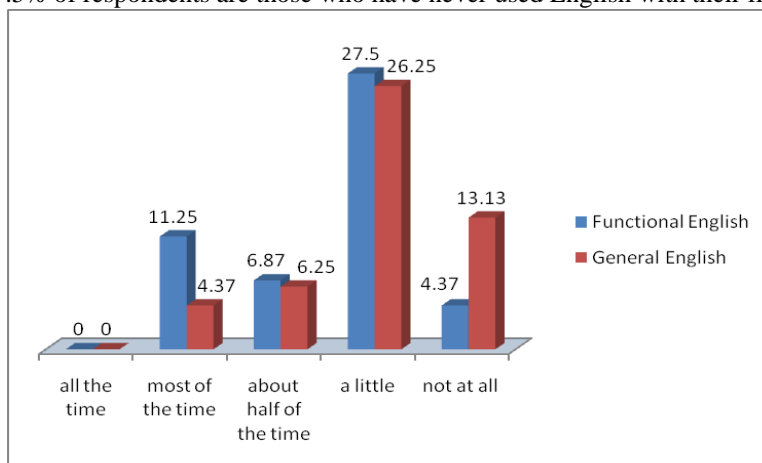


Figure 4

Figure 4 shows us that Functional English students use English more often with their friends. As is clear they have the higher percentage of usage of English than General English respondents.

Table 3: Mean scores showing use of English with Friends in both Functional English and General English students

	Stream									
	With Functional English					Only General English				
	Use of English with Friends					Use of English with Friends				
	All the time	Most of the time	About half the time	A little	Not at all	All the time	Most of the time	About half the time	A little	Not at all

	Me an	Std Dev iati on	Mea n	Std Dev iatio n	Me an	Std Dev iati on	Me an	Std Dev iation	Me an	Std De viation	Mea n	Std Dev iation	Mean	Std Dev iation	Me an	Std Dev iation	Me an	Std Dev iation	Me an	Std Dev iation
Writing Skill	3.66	.80	3.24	.75	2.98	1.11	2.42	.89	2.19	.51	3.00	.57	2.9	.89	2.5	.52	2.0	.67	1.92	.63
Reading Skill	3.65	.86	3.55	.96	3.07	.82	2.8	.75	2.22	.62	3.46	.67	3.3	.63	2.8	.46	2.6	.63	1.99	.54
Listening Skill	2.7	1.01	2.48	1.02	2.0	1.20	1.8	1.22	1.1	.12	2.25	.90	2.05	.97	1.83	.53	1.6	.95	1.24	.11
Speaking Skill	2.71	1.06	2.59	.93	2.43	1.01	2.1	1.33	1.44	.15	2.29	.58	2.12	.86	1.9	.52	1.73	.94	1.56	.130

The use of English language with friends tends to develop better levels of proficiency in the English language. Thus above table clearly shows that the respondents who use English with their friends most of the time have greater mean scores than those who never use English with friends and classmates. It can be attributed to the fact that by communicating in English, respondent’s gain access to language.

**3.2 Use of English with Family Members and Others:**

Rajagopal (1976), in his study among Malay-medium students in selected schools in Selangor, observed that students who were less competent in English were those handicapped by their environment. They received less opportunity and encouragement to use English at home. Even their contacts outside the home did not provide them with situations in which they could use the language.

**3.2 (a) Use of English with Family Members:**

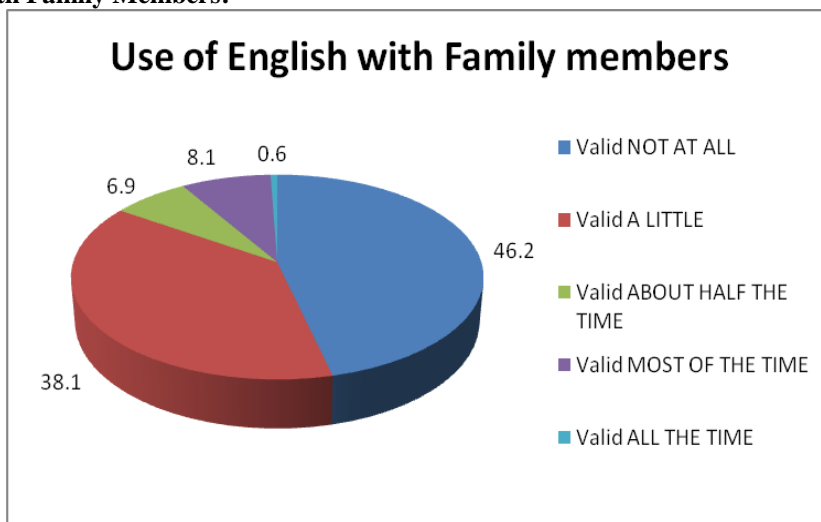


Figure 5: Use of English with Family Members

The respondents were asked about the use of English with their family members. As is evident from the figure, 46.2% of respondents never used English with their family members, 38.1% use little English with them and mere 0.6% use English all the time with their family members. Only 8.1% respondents have claimed to use English most of the time with their family members.

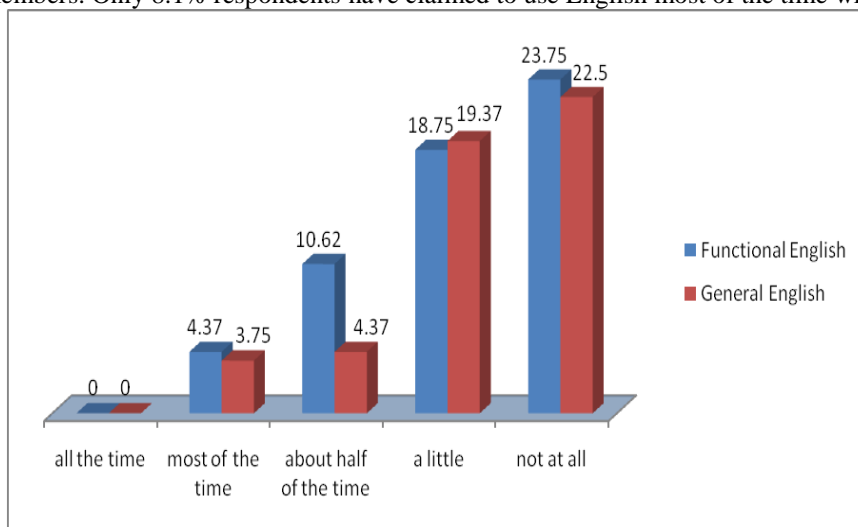


Figure 6

This percentage graph also indicates that Functional English respondents have greater percentages than General English respondents.

Table 4: Mean scores showing use of English with Family members in both Functional English and General English students.

	Stream																			
	With Functional English										Only General English									
	Use of English with Family members										Use of English with Family members									
	All the time		Most of the time		About half the time		A little		Not at all		All the time		Most of the time		About half the time		A little		Not at all	
	Mean	Std Deviation	Mean	Std Deviation	Mean	Std Deviation	Mean	Std Deviation	Mean	Std Deviation	Mean	Std Deviation	Mean	Std Deviation	Mean	Std Deviation	Mean	Std Deviation	Mean	Std Deviation
Writing Skill	3.50	.94	3.08	.63	3.13	.92	2.33	.58	1.81	.51	3.12	.67	3.03	.64	3.00	.85	2.87	.98	1.62	.63
Reading Skill	3.67	.91	3.53	.90	3.38	.82	2.67	.58	1.94	.62	3.52	.85	3.41	.50	3.22	.51	2.83	.41	1.78	.54
Listening Skill	2.61	.99	2.20	1.06	2.00	1.15	1.33	.58	1.31	.12	2.52	.82	2.12	.94	2.00	.90	1.67	.82	1.21	.11
Speaking Skill	2.96	.95	2.58	.98	2.40	.83	1.80	.00	1.44	.15	2.88	.71	2.56	.73	2.25	.97	2.00	.89	1.32	.130

It is believed that if a learner converses with his/her family members in English language, his /her chances of increase in proficiency of English language will be greater. It can be inferred from the above table that mean scores are highest in the respondents who use English all the time with their family members.

3.2 (b) Use of English with Others:

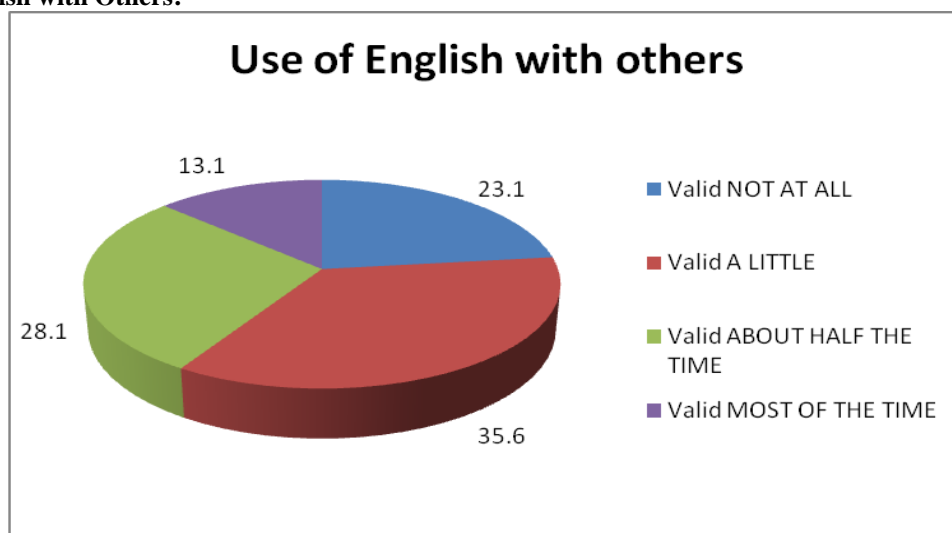


Figure 7: Use of English with Others

The respondents were asked about use of English with others (neighbours, shopkeepers, etc in the market). 13.1% of respondents claim that they use English most of the time with others, 28.1% use it about half of the time. 23.1% have never used English with others and 35.6% used little English with others.

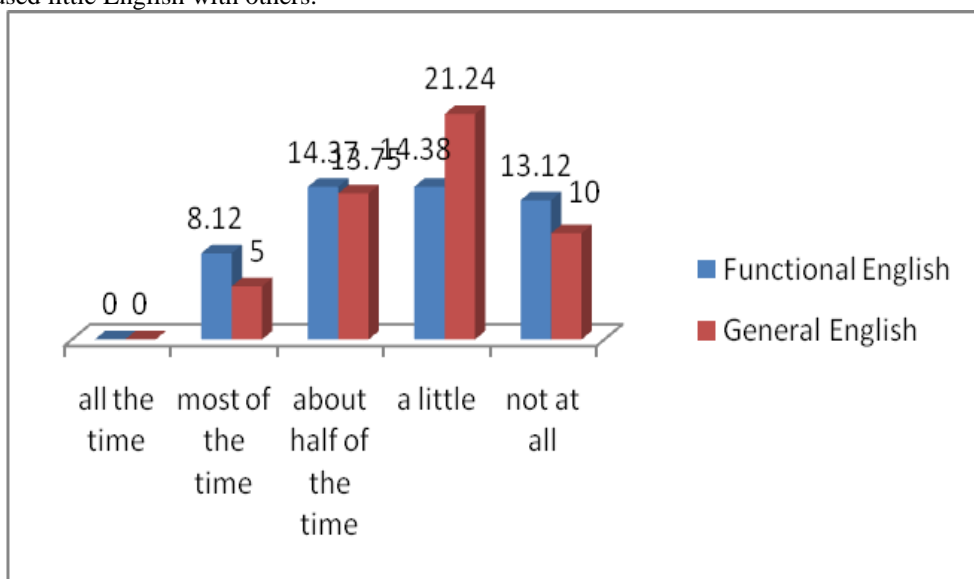


Figure 8

The above charts indicate that Functional English respondents use English more frequently with others than General English respondents.

Table 5: Mean scores showing use of English with others in both Functional English and General English students.

	Stream																			
	With Functional English										Only General English									
	Use of English with Others										Use of English with Others									
	All the time		Most of the time		About half the time		A little		Not at all		All the time		Most of the time		About half the time		A little		Not at all	
Mean	Std Deviation	Mean	Std Deviation	Mean	Std Deviation	Mean	Std Deviation	Mean	Std Deviation	Mean	Std Deviation	Mean	Std Deviation	Mean	Std Deviation	Mean	Std Deviation	Mean	Std Deviation	
Writing Skill	3.30	.87	2.95	.83	2.50	.55	2.00	.72	1.71	.51	3.25	.80	3.07	.61	2.80	1.00	2.25	.50	1.52	.63
Reading Skill	3.60	.79	3.20	1.11	3.03	.82	2.90	.81	1.82	.62	3.41	.64	3.23	.63	3.06	.53	2.80	.82	1.8	.54
Listening Skill	2.42	1.06	2.15	1.09	2.00	.75	1.80	.2	1.21	.12	2.46	.99	2.00	.76	1.76	.53	1.35	1.26	1.19	.11
Speaking Skill	2.74	1.02	2.30	.92	2.07	1.21	1.98	.21	1.34	.15	2.54	.73	2.03	.74	1.98	.83	1.75	.50	1.29	.13

It can be said that respondents excel in English language when communicating with others too. The above table clearly infers that those respondents score more who most of the time use English with others than those who never expresses in English with others. It also points towards the fact that more frequent use of English ultimately affects the proficiency of respondents.

#### 4. Conclusion:

It is believed that if a learner uses English language in their communication, his /her chances of increase in proficiency of English language will be greater. It can be inferred from the figure 2 that a good percentage of students use English with their teachers and there is not much considerable difference of usage of English in Functional English and General English respondents. This indicates that most of the students whether Functional English or only General English prefer to use English in their school domain. A very little percentage of students use English with their friends and few use English with their family members while as a fair amount of students use English in their communication with others. However the Functional English student performs comparatively better than General English students in all four skills. The results also show positive relationship between proficiency and English language use in various domains. Moreover those who have meaningful exposure to English language are generally more proficient in the use of the language and consequently would do better in the proficiency test that would be administered to them.

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