Chapter Five

Patterns in Achievement – English Language 2014

5.1 Introduction

The achievement of English language based on the marks of the English language test which was administered to students completing grade 8 in year 2014 will be discussed in this chapter. First the achievement levels of students and the nature of the distribution of marks are analyzed. Next, disparities in achievement levels in relation to school type, gender, medium of instruction and location of school are presented. Differences in achievement pertaining to various provinces are also analyzed. English language achievement too is assessed by various competencies and competency levels.

5.2 Achievement Levels in English Language at All Island and Provincial Levels

Based on the mean and the median values of the test marks, the achievement levels are discussed. These are the indicators normally used to assess the level of performance especially, median can be used as a representative value of a set of data when the distribution of values is considerably skewed. Those values related to English language results are given in Table 5.1 below.

Table 5.1: All island and provincial achievement in English language 2014 – Summary statistics

Province	Mean	Rank	Standard Deviation	Standard Error of Mean	Percentile (p25)=Q1	Median (p50)=Q2	Percentile (p75)=Q3	Skewness
Western	41.04	1	20.86	0.08	26.41	34.51	56.71	0.73
Southern	37.27	2	19.75	0.10	24.21	30.71	46.61	1.11
North Western	35.11	3	17.76	0.09	22.11	30.05	44.41	1.12
Sabaragamuwa	34.87	4	16.60	0.10	22.61	30.21	44.71	1.03
Central	33.82	5	17.82	0.09	22.21	30.41	42.31	1.23
Uva	31.86	6	15.79	0.11	22.35	28.61	75.21	1.29
Eastern	31.28	7	14.27	0.08	22.50	28.21	38.01	1.01
North Central	29.81	8	13.32	0.09	20.87	28.35	34.51	1.29
Northern	29.24	9	15.87	0.11	18.21	24.41	34.41	1.65
All Island	35.23		18.32	0.03	22.31	30.05	44.31	1.13

According to Table 5.1, all island mean value of achievement test marks is 35.23. This cannot be taken as a satisfactory level. On the other hand, the median value is 30.05 which can be considered as another representative value of achievement level. This value further confirms the unsatisfactory level of the achievement of English language. Dispersion of marks also seems to be considerably high. Standard deviation is 18.32. This is indicative of the fact that disparities in student achievement are very high.

All island and provincial level achievement further presented by Figure 5.1 below.

The mean values of marks related to achievement in English language of Central Province, Northern Province, Eastern Province, North Central Province, Uva Province and Sabaragamuwa Province are below 35. The median values of these provinces are also below 35. The mean values of the other provinces are above 35. However, the median values of these provinces also are below 35. On the other hand, in all the provinces mean values and median values are below 40 except Western Province where the mean value is 41.04. This indicates that achievement levels of students in English language are not satisfactory.

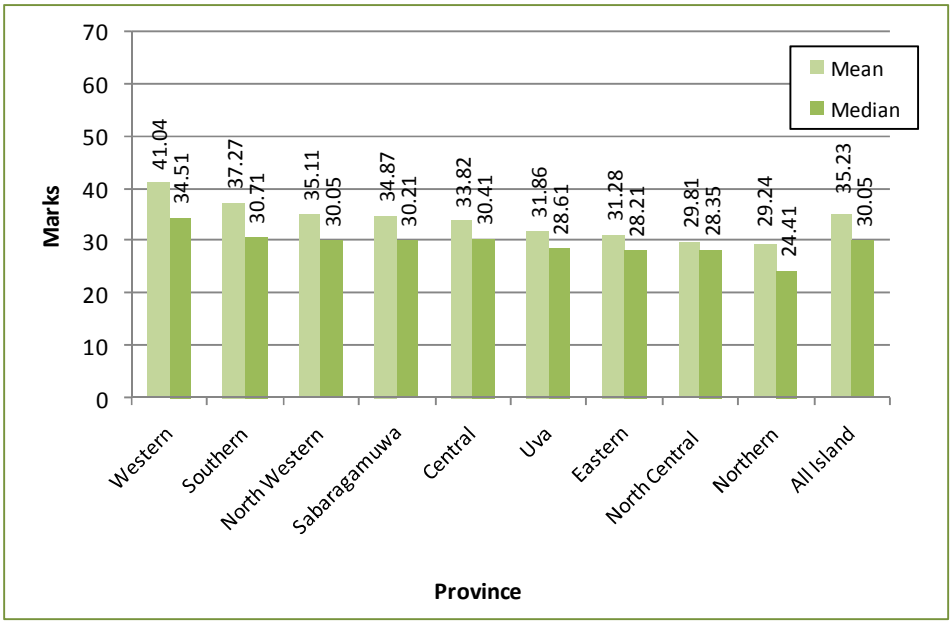

Figure 5.1: Mean values and median values of English language marks

5.3 Distribution of Test Scores of English Language

The nature of the distribution of test scores of the English language is presented by Figure 5.2 and Table 5.2.

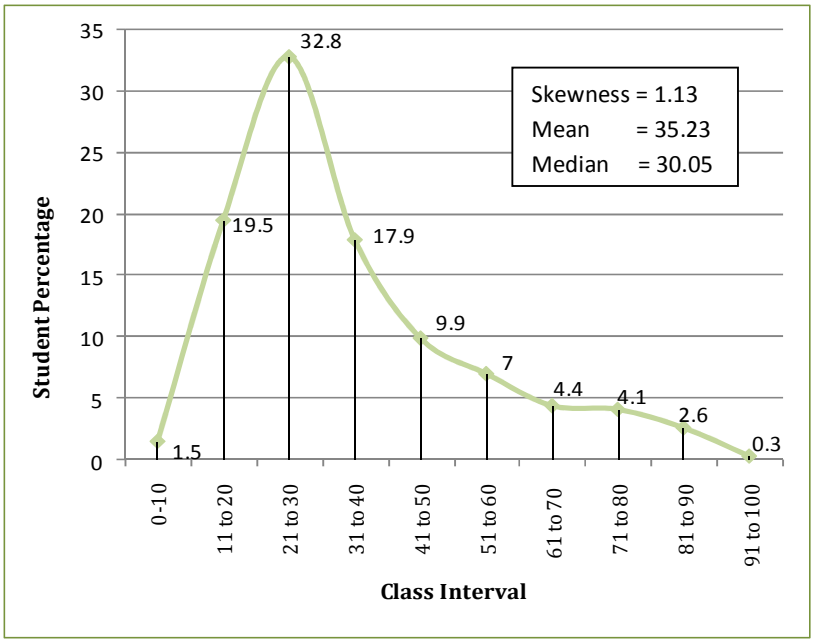

Figure 5.2: All island achievement in English language –distribution of marks

Table 5.2: Distribution of all island achievement marks of English language

Class Interval	Student %	Cumulative %
00 to 10	1.5	1.5
11 to 20	19.5	21.0
21 to 30	32.8	53.9
31 to 40	17.9	71.8
41 to 50	9.9	81.7
51 to 60	7.0	88.7
61 to 70	4.4	93.1
71 to 80	4.1	97.1
81 to 90	2.6	99.7
91 to 100	0.3	100.0
Total	100.0	

According to Figure 5.2, it can clearly be seen that the marks are positively skewed (SK=1.13). This indicates that majority of students tends to be lower achievers in English language. In addition, Table 5.2 shows that most of the students belong to score categories of lower levels. Nearly 82 percent of the total number of students belongs 50 or less than 50 marks categories. Almost 70 percent of students belong to 11-40 mark category.

Positively skewed marks distribution, can be seen in all the provinces with a slight variations in the skewness. This is shown by Figure 5.3

This highly positive distribution of marks is not a satisfactory situation regarding achievement levels. It carries the need to rethink the effort made to enhance the achievement level of English language of students in this grade.

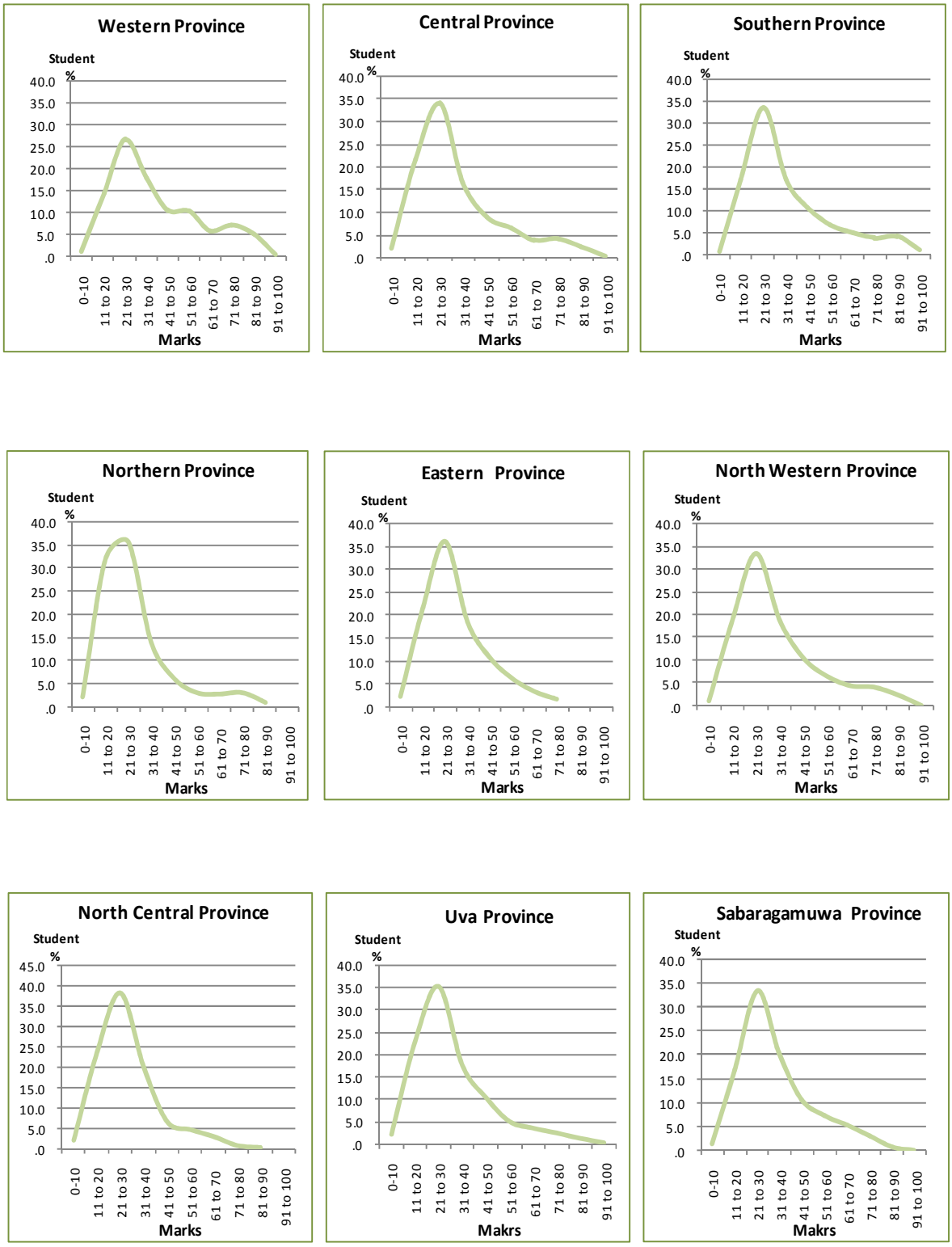

Figure 5.3: Provincial-wise distribution of marks – English language

Patterns of achievement of English language are further elaborated by the box and whisker plots in Figure 5.4 below. Small circles in the figure represent the students who have taken extremely high marks (outliers). The figure clearly shows that in almost all the provinces, there is a small group of students who shows extremely high achievement levels although the achievement in general is low in all these provinces except in Western Province. This is an important phenomenon to be investigated further.

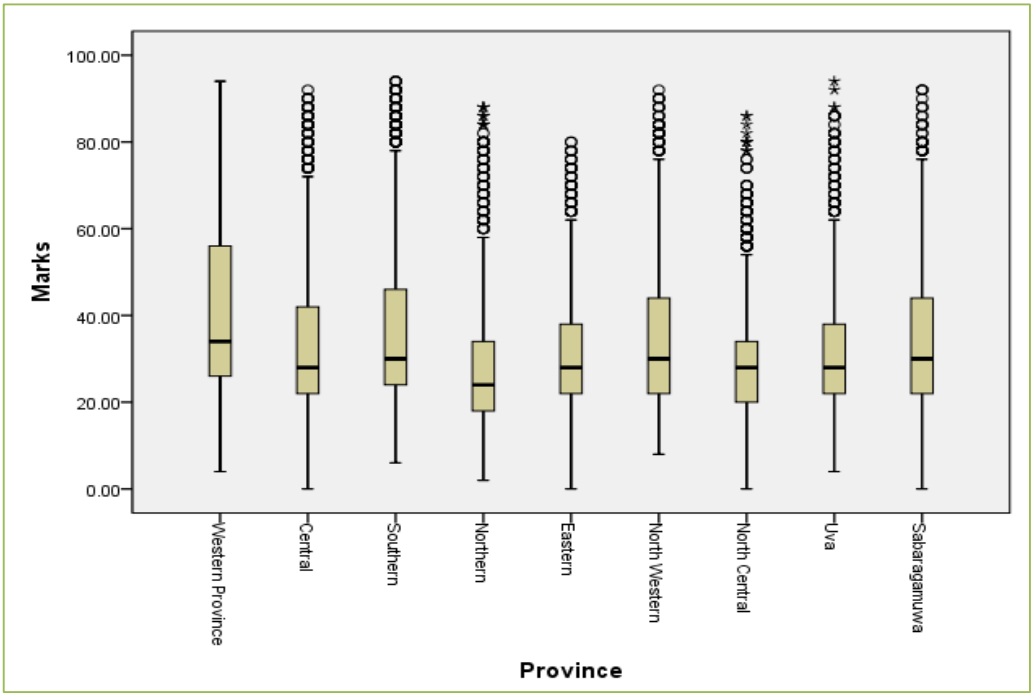

Figure 5.4: English language marks representation using boxplot and whisker plot

5.4 Disparities in Achievement in English Language

Under the disparities in achievement four particular aspects of disparities are discussed. Disparities in relation to school type, gender, medium of instruction and school location are analyzed in this way.

5.4.1 Disparities in Achievement in English Language in Relation to School Type

It is well known that various efforts and strategies have been taken to provide equal opportunities for students irrespective of the type of school which they attend. However, according to the Table 5.3, and Figure 5.5, there are noticeable discrepancies in levels of achievement of students attending different types of schools.

Table 5.3: English language achievement marks according to school type

School Type	Mean	Standard Deviation	Median	Skewness	F	P
1AB	41.64	20.28	36.27	0.71	25,252	.000
1C	28.28	11.90	26.51	1.27		
Type 2	27.58	12.94	24.64	1.45		
All Island	35.23	18.32	30.05	1.13		

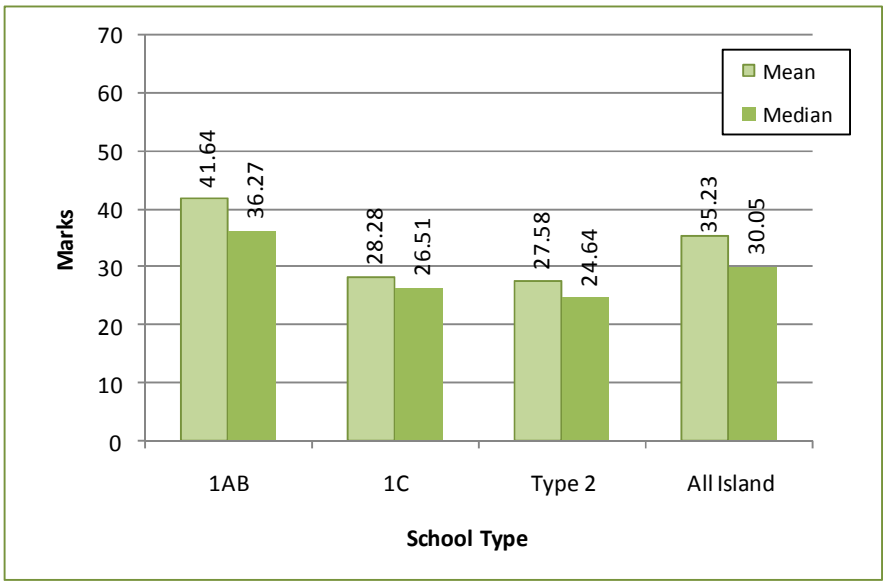

Figure 5.5: Mean values of English language marks according to school type

The achievement levels of students attending 1AB schools seem to be higher (mean-41.64) than that of those who are attending 1C schools (mean=28.28) and Type 2 schools (mean=27.58). However, there is no considerable disparity in achievement levels of students attending 1C and Type 2 schools. Meanwhile it clearly shows that the dispersion of marks of the students attending 1AB schools is very high when compared with other schools.

In addition to the analysis conducted to see the disparities in English language achievement pertaining to school type, the distribution of marks of the same is given below in Table 5.4. It shows that the same pattern of distribution can be seen with regard to 1C and Type 2 schools. In other words, distribution of marks is highly positively skewed. This distribution shows low achievement of students in these schools. However, distribution of marks related to 1AB schools shows somewhat satisfactory level of achievement when compared with those of the other two types of schools. These patterns can be observed in Figure 5.6.

Table 5.4: Distribution of English language achievement marks according to school type

Class Interval	1AB Student %	Cumulative %	1C Student %	Cumulative %	Type 2 Student %	Cumulative %
00-10	0.65	0.65	1.88	1.88	3.49	3.49
11-20	12.33	12.98	26.00	27.88	30.34	33.83
21-30	26.15	39.13	41.73	69.61	38.15	71.97
31-40	19.13	58.26	17.33	86.95	15.20	87.17
41-50	12.73	70.99	6.98	93.93	6.06	93.23
51-60	9.92	80.91	3.81	97.74	3.55	96.78
61-70	6.67	87.58	1.61	99.35	2.32	99.10
71-80	7.06	94.64	0.62	99.97	0.75	99.85
81-90	4.76	99.40	0.03	100.00	0.15	100.00
91-100	0.60	100.00	0.00	100.00	0.00	100.00
Total	100.00		100.00		100.00	

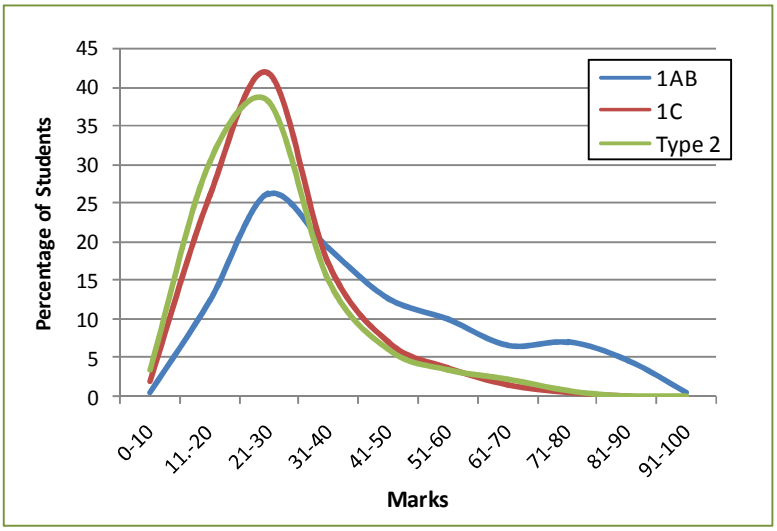

Figure 5.6: Distribution of English language achievement marks according to school type

5.4.2 Disparities in Achievement in English Language in Relation to Gender

Confirming the general trend in other research findings conducted by NEREC, this study too shows that the achievement levels in English of girls are higher than that of boys. The mean value of test marks of girls is 37.87 and for boys it is 32.40. This tendency can be seen even by comparing the median values. The median value related achievement of girls is 32.15. And for the boys it is 28.31. Table 5.5 and Figure 5.7 show this.

Table 5.5: English language achievement marks according to gender

Gender	Mean	Standard Deviation	Median	Skewness	F	P
Male	32.40	16.89	28.31	1.34	7,168.95	.000
Female	37.87	19.18	32.15	0.95		
All Island	35.23	18.32	30.05	1.13		

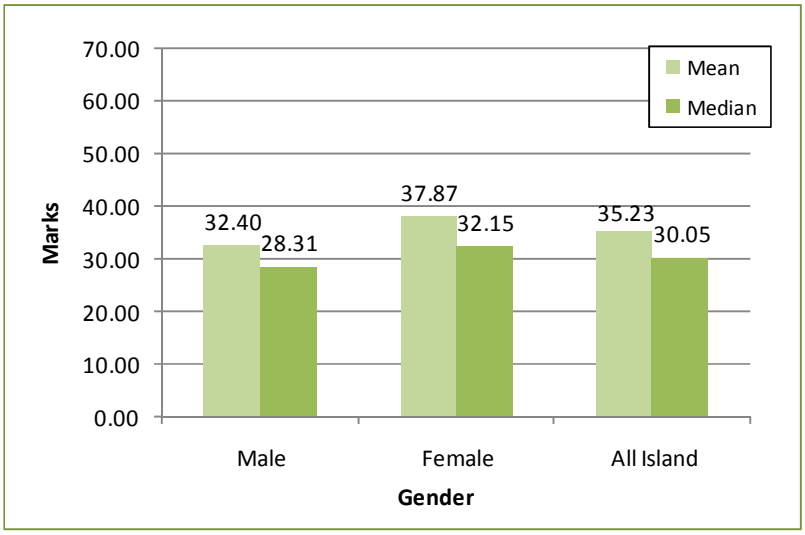

Figure 5.7: Mean values of English language marks according to gender

Distribution of marks in English language was analyzed according to gender as well. Such data are given in Table 5.6 and further highlighted in Figure 5.8. According to both the table and the figure, distribution of marks of both male and female students is positively skewed. It further shows that girls' performance is better than that of boys. Similar observations were made in distribution of marks concerning science and mathematics as well.

Table 5.6: Distribution of English language achievement marks according to gender

Class Interval	Male %	Cumulative %	Female %	Cumulative %
00-10	2.08	2.08	0.98	0.98
11-20	23.21	25.29	16.09	17.08
21-30	35.56	60.85	30.31	47.39
31-40	17.12	77.97	18.64	66.03
41-50	8.12	86.09	11.49	77.51
51-60	5.64	91.74	8.27	85.79
61-70	3.47	95.21	5.30	91.09
71-80	3.07	98.28	4.96	96.05
81-90	1.46	99.74	3.58	99.63
91-100	0.26	100.00	0.37	100.00
Total	100.00		100.00	

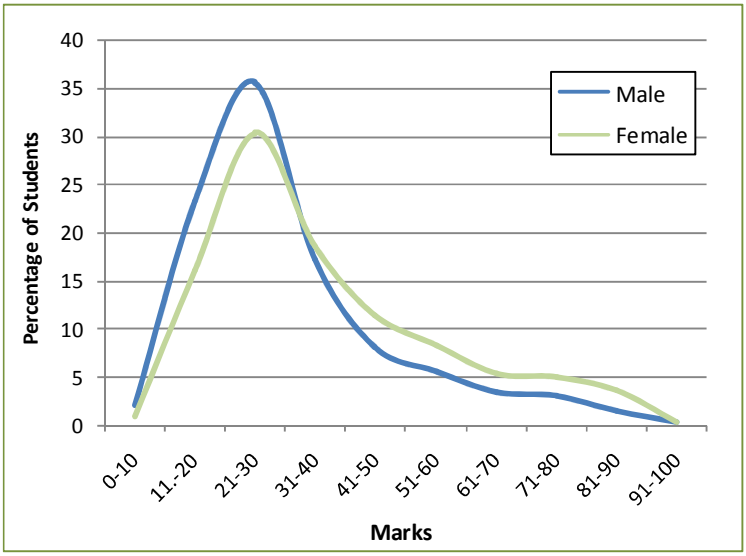

Table 5.8: Distribution of English language achievement marks according to gender

5.4.3 Disparities in Achievement in English Language in Relation to Medium of Instruction

According to the Table 5.7 which is given below, considerable difference of achievement can be seen in relation to medium of instruction. The mean value of achievement of English language in students studying in Tamil medium is lower (28.58) than that of Sinhala medium students (37.49). This difference can be observed even when the values of median of both groups are compared as well.

Table 5.7: English language achievement marks according to medium of instruction

Medium of Instruction	Mean	Standard Deviation	Median	Skewness	F	P
Sinhala	37.49	19.26	32.71	0.98	14,772	.000
Tamil	28.58	13.08	26.15	1.36		
All Island	35.23	18.32	30.05	1.13		

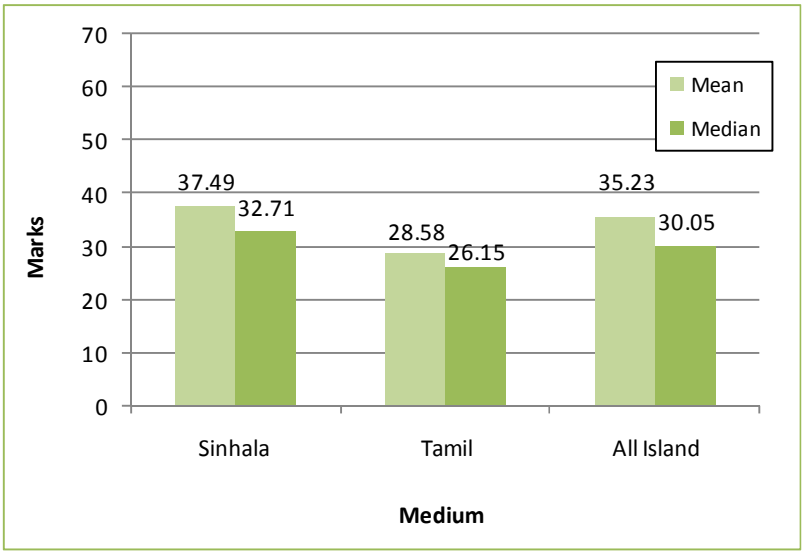

Figure 5.9: Mean values of English language marks according to medium of instruction

Disparities in achievement of students in both Sinhala and Tamil media were studied by analyzing the nature of the distribution of marks in English language. Both distributions are positively skewed. However, skewness of the distribution of marks of Tamil medium students is somewhat higher than that of the Sinhala medium students. This shows that the achievement in English of Tamil medium students is not so satisfactory when compared with Sinhala medium students. Data are given in Table 5.8 and in Figure 5.10.

Table 5.8: Distribution of English language achievement marks according to medium of instruction

Class Interval	Sinhala %	Cumulative %	Tamil %	Cumulative %
00-10	1.21	1.21	2.37	2.37
11-20	16.99	18.20	26.75	29.12
21-30	31.13	49.33	37.79	66.91
31-40	18.56	67.90	16.12	83.03
41-50	10.61	78.51	7.77	90.80
51-60	8.03	86.54	4.06	94.86
61-70	5.07	91.61	2.59	97.45
71-80	4.73	96.33	2.09	99.54
81-90	3.24	99.57	0.46	100.00
91-100	0.43	100.00	0.00	100.00
Total	100.00		100.00	

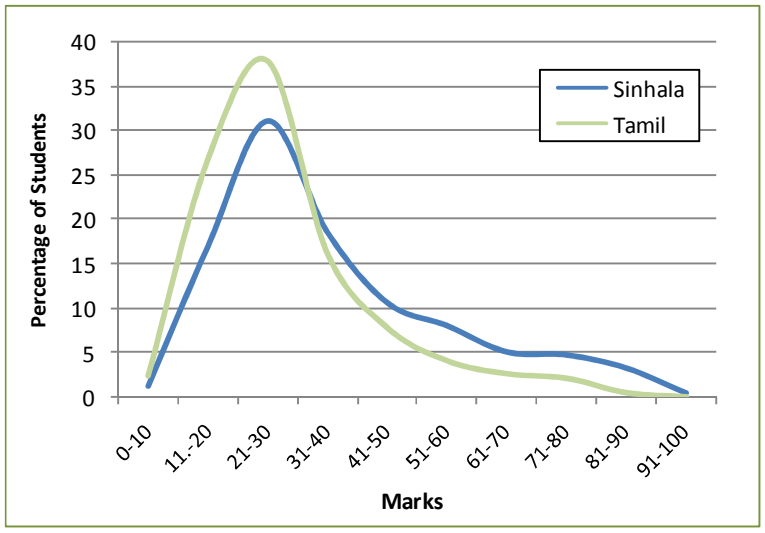

Figure 5.10: Distribution of English language achievement marks according to medium of instruction

5.4.4 Disparities in Achievement in English Language in Relation to Location of School

Achievement disparities can be observed in relation to the locations of schools as well. Schools belonging to areas that come under Municipal Councils show higher achievement levels (mean=47.17) than those belonging to Urban Council areas (mean=40.01) and Pradeshiya Sabas (mean=30.52). Schools belonging to Pradeshiya

sabas show lower achievement than those belonging to Urban Councils. This can be seen in Table 5.9.

Table 5.9: English language achievement marks according to location

Location	Mean	Standard Deviation	Median	Skewness	F	P
Municipal Council	47.17	23.17	42.22	0.36	25,691	.000
Urban Council	40.01	18.07	36.71	0.65		
Pradeshiya Saba	30.52	14.25	28.15	1.32		
All Island	35.23	18.32	30.05	1.13		

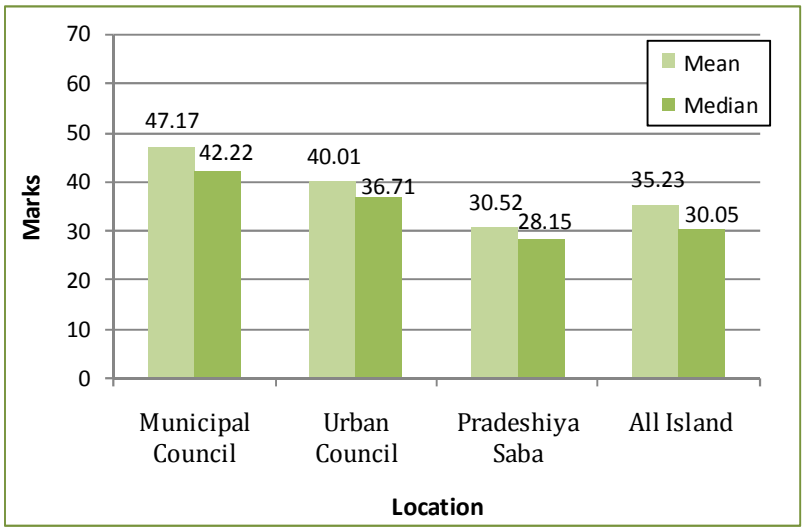

Figure 5.11: Mean values of English language marks according to location

Considering location of Sri Lankan schools belonging to every province, these disparities are universal.

Disparities in achievement of students in English language with regard to the location of school can be seen when the distribution of marks is analyzed. The highest positive skewness in the distribution of marks can be seen in students in Pradeshiya saba areas while the lowest is seen in Municipal council areas. This is shown in Table 5.10 and in Figure 5.12. This shows that the achievement of students in Municipal Council areas is better than those of the other two areas and the achievement of students in Urban Council areas is better than that of the Pradeshiya Saba areas.

Table 5.10: Distribution of English language achievement marks according to location

Class Interval	Municipal Council %	Cumulative %	Urban Council %	Cumulative %	Pradeshiya Saba %	Cumulative %
00-10	0.91	0.91	0.77	0.77	1.85	1.85
11-20	11.09	12.00	11.83	12.60	23.75	25.60
21-30	21.45	33.45	26.39	38.99	37.73	63.33
31-40	15.67	49.12	20.27	59.26	18.12	81.45
41-50	10.81	59.93	13.69	72.94	8.78	90.22
51-60	9.54	69.47	12.56	85.51	5.06	95.29
61-70	8.35	77.83	7.10	92.61	2.64	97.92
71-80	11.26	89.09	5.24	97.85	1.56	99.48
81-90	9.60	98.69	2.11	99.96	0.45	99.94
91-100	1.31	100.00	0.04	100.00	0.06	100.00
Total	100		100		100	

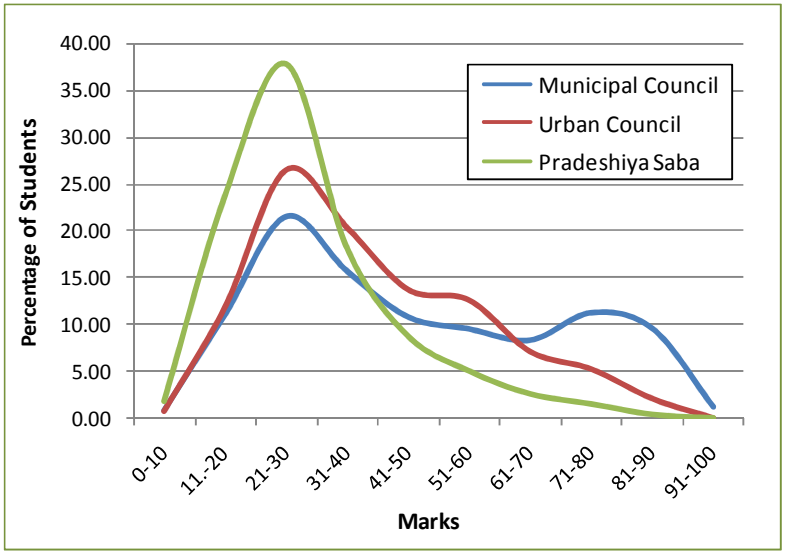

Figure 5.12: Distribution of English language achievement marks according to location

English language performance level of students who attends to schools in urban areas is considerably high (Mean =44.32) compared with the achievement level of students attending to schools located in rural areas (Mean =30.53). Figure 5.13 shows this clearly.

Table 5.11: English language achievement marks according to location - Urban /Rural

Location	Mean	Standard Deviation	Median	Skewness	F	P
Urban	44.32	21.57	38.41	0.52	46,122.52	.000
Rural	30.53	14.26	28.32	1.32		
All Island	35.23	18.32	30.05	1.13		

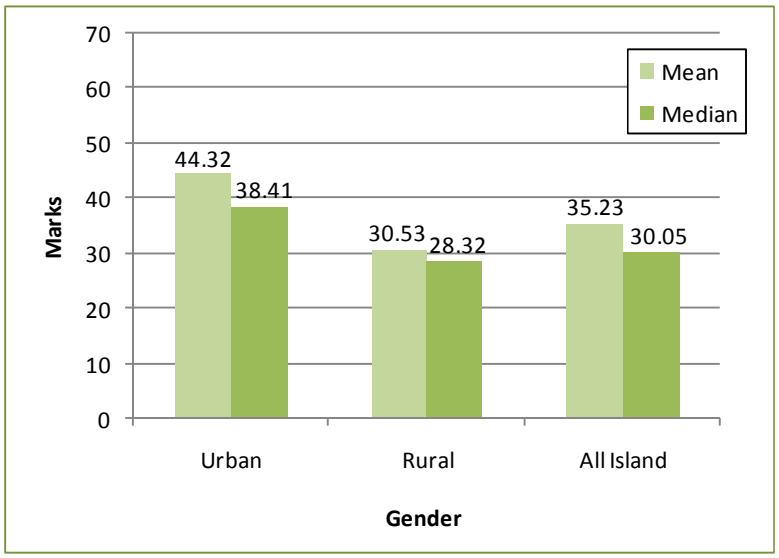

Figure 5.13: Mean values of English language marks according to location- Urban/Rural

When schools are classified according to urban and rural categories, a difference between the distribution of marks of schools belonging to urban and rural areas can be seen. With regard to the nature of the distribution of marks of students in both urban and rural areas, a positive skewness is seen. However, the skewness is higher concerning rural areas. This further highlights low achievement of students in English language in rural areas. These are shown in Table 5.12 and in Figure 5.14.

Table 5.12: Distribution of English language achievement marks according to location – Urban/Rural

Class Interval	Urban %	Cumulative %	Rural %	Cumulative %
00-10	0.85	0.85	1.85	1.85
11-20	11.39	12.24	23.75	25.60
21-30	23.42	35.66	37.73	63.33
31-40	17.50	53.16	18.12	81.45
41-50	11.96	65.12	8.78	90.22
51-60	10.75	75.87	5.06	95.29
61-70	7.85	83.72	2.64	97.92
71-80	8.86	92.58	1.56	99.48
81-90	6.61	99.20	0.45	99.94
91-100	0.80	100.00	0.06	100.00
Total	100.00		100.00	

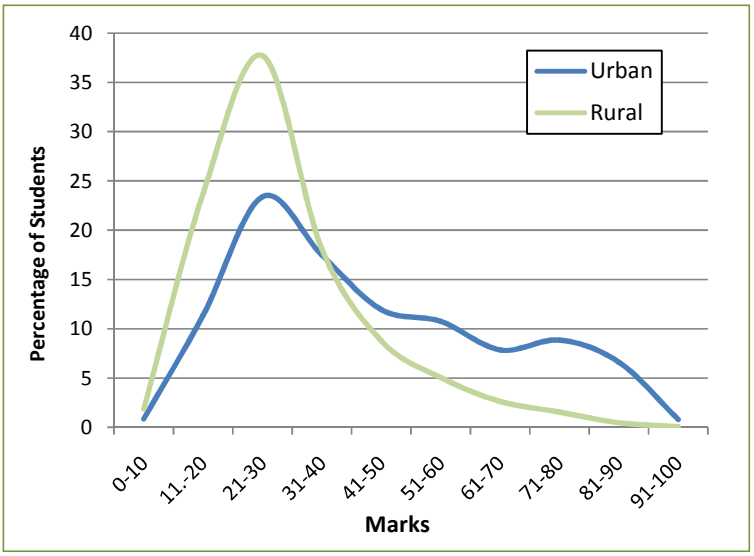

Figure 5.14: Distribution of English language achievement marks according to location – Urban/Rural

5.5 Achievement of English Language by Competency Levels

Learning outcomes of English language were assessed based on different competencies and competency levels. Competencies related to four areas were especially tested. They are writing, grammar, reading and vocabulary. The percentages of students who achieved different competency levels are given in Table 5.13 and they are further illustrated by Figure 5.15

Table 5.13: Achievement of competency levels – English language

Competency	Competency Level	Percentage	Average Percentage
Vocabulary	4.4 Uses English words in the proper contexts	49.6	48.1
	4.5 uses the dictionary effectively	40.4	
	4.6 uses visual clues and contextual clues to derive the meaning of words	54.3	
Reading	5.4. Transfers information into other forms	35.7	41.1
	5.5. Extracts the general idea of a text	46.5	
Grammar	6.2. Analyze the grammatical relations within a sentence	45.4	44.9
	6.6.Construct complex sentences through the process of subordination	44.4	
Writing	2.4 Uses commas with understanding	47.3	
	7.5. Writes short stories	10.5	
	7.6. writes brief notes	0.7	

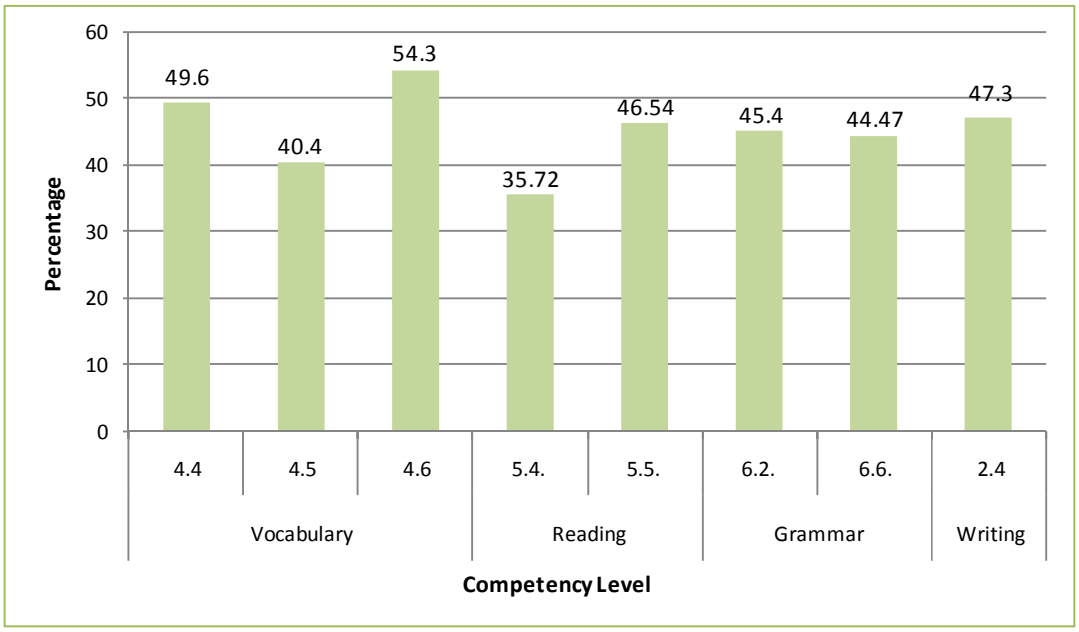

Figure 5.15: Achievement of competency levels – English language

In relation to vocabulary, out of the three competency levels that were tested, only one has been achieved by the majority of students. That is the ability to 'use visual clues and contextual clues to derive the meaning of words'. This has been achieved by 54.3 percent of the students. The average percentage of students who achieved the expected competency levels in vocabulary is 48.1 percent.

With regard to competencies in reading, 41.1 percent of students have achieved the expected competency levels. In this regard, the students are able to 'transfers information into other forms and extract the general idea of a text'. Concerning grammar, the percentage of students who have been able to achieve expected competency levels is 44.9. Two competency levels assessed in this area were to 'analyze the grammatical relations within a sentence' and 'construct complex sentences through the process of subordination'. These have been achieved by 45.4 and 44.4 percentage of students respectively.

The poorest achievement is shown in the skill 'writing'. Most of the students have not attempted to answer the given questions related to writing task. Table 5.14 shows the performance indicated by the marks obtained for writing a brief note.

Table 5.14: Performance in writing a brief note

	Not Attempted	**Attempted**						
Marks		**0**	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**Total**
%	60	7.7	3.9	5.3	6.9	6.4	10.5	100

According to Table 5.14, only a very small percentage of students have been able to achieve the expected level in writing a brief note. Only 10.5 % of the students have been able to score the highest mark for this writing task. Writing a guided short story was another question to assess the competencies that relate to the skill, writing. Performance achieved in this regard denoted by the marks obtained is given in Table 5.15.

Table 5.15: Performance in writing a guided short story

	Not Attempted	**Attempted**											
Marks		**0**	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**8**	**9**	**10**	**Total**
%	75	10	2.2	2.5	1.7	2.1	2.6	2	1.8	1.8	1.4	0.7	100

In this task too, majority of the students has not attempted to answer the question. According to Table 5.15 achievement level in this task is not satisfactory. Only 0.7 percent of the students have been able to score the total marks for this question. In general, achievement of competency levels with regard to writing is not satisfactory.

5.6 Summary

The achievement of English language test which was administered to students completing grade 8 in year 2014 was discussed in this chapter. The average achievement of English language is 35.23. The distribution of marks of English Language is highly positively skewed indicating that the majority of students belong to low marks category. There are disparities in achievement pertaining to school type, gender, medium of instruction and location. Competency levels related to writing show less achievement.