CHAPTER FOUR

LEARNERS' COMPETENCE
4.1 Introductory

Learners' competence is related to their socio-economic conditions as well as their learning strategies. The socio-economic profile of our learners has been given in Chapter III, and their learning strategies will be discussed in the next chapter. Proficiency tests are administered to a group of learners in order to determine their competence. The findings of these tests are of considerable interest and significance.

The results of a proficiency test reveal the learners' needs on the one hand and the nature of the tasks given in the classroom on the other. They also enable one to find out where the pupils stand on the continuum of the process of learning/teaching. That is to say, one can locate the position of the tasks done in the class in terms of the learners' future needs and find out how close they are to the expected terminal behaviour, which, in turn, should satisfy the demands of the learners, the teaching establishment and the user-institution.
4.2 Language proficiency defined

Chomsky (1957, 1965) has distinguished between 'competence' (the speaker-hearer's knowledge of his language) and 'performance' (the actual use of language in concrete situations). The functionalists' criticism of this distinction has been twofold: first, the concept of 'performance' has been used by the generativists as a 'hold-all', containing for too heterogeneous phenomena to be theoretically satisfactory; second, the distinction totally ignores the rules of 'communicative appropriacy' or 'use' (Hymes, 1972; Widdowson, 1978). The concept of 'competence', it is argued, must be made more comprehensive to include grammaticality as well as communicative appropriacy, and the goals of linguistic theorizing should be redefined accordingly. The functionalist position claims that linguistic structure cannot be understood or explained adequately without reference to the social functions of language.

Richards et al. (1985 : 159) define language proficiency as "a person's proficiency in using a language for a specific purpose". They discriminate language achievement from language proficiency. The former refers to the "language ability as a result of learning" whereas the latter stands for "the degree of skill with which a person can read, write, speak or understand language".

Any analysis of the nature of writing tasks would become valid or meaningful only when the task is placed against the
background of the learners' proficiency. Needless to say that the task which asks the learners to write, for example, a letter to a given addressee with a given message cannot result in the same or similar compositions by them.

4.3 Theories of poor school performance

Mainly four theories have been put forth to explain the poor school achievement of the ethnic minority learners. Earlier their achievement was attributed to their innate qualities and later to their environment, and now the condemnation is heaped on the schools.

4.3.1 The Native Endowment Theory

The earliest view was that the ethnic minority learners were genetically inferior, and hence their poor academic achievement. The old view was later revived and supported by Jensen (1969). Jensen's studies relate to the Black and White learners' differences in school performance. On account of inferior genetic endowments, he held, the Black learners do not perform as well as the White learners in schools. He displayed by calculation that eighty per cent of a person's IQ is inherited and about twenty per cent is attributable to environment. He distinguished two levels of intelligence on the basis of non-abstract thinking and symbolic thinking. Both the levels, according to him, are genotypically distinct. The children of all classes, including the Black and the White, possess type I IQ in about the same degree during the various stages of their
development. They also possess the same type II IQ during the initial stage. But the latter tends to develop more fully among higher social classes with the increase in age (Jensen, 1969, 1972, 1973). This view received more disapproval than support, though many of his critics (e.g. Ogbu, 1978) appreciated him for his careful scholarship and the mass of evidence in support of his thesis.

4.3.2 The Deficit (or Cultural Deprivation) Theory

Later, the poor school performance of the ethnic minority learner was attributed to his environment—the home and the social and ethnic structure to which he belonged. Bugelski (1965), Hebb (1947) and Hunt (1964) reported numerous studies supporting the concept that perception was but a learned behaviour. Piaget (1960) considered intelligence a function of the general mental adaptability of the organism to the environment. Ansubel (1966) stated that motivation for learning, like cognitive abilities, as potential and not inherent or endogeneous. These psychologists believed that all these abilities were dependent on adequate environmental stimulation and that the home and social environment of the ethnic minority learners were not conducive for their development.

Miller (1968) identified four major classes of variables where ethnic minority children, as compared to the advantaged learners, showed deficits in performances. They are: physical variables, motivational variables, personal style variables, and
cognitive variables. The cognitive variables refer to the abilities of an individual which are necessary to function at a level of abstraction and which include perceptual, conceptual and linguistic abilities. The poor and ethnic minority children, according to him, lack adequate perceptual constancy and discrimination owing to infrequent exposure to varied stimulating environmental conditions. They are also poor in conceptual abilities as their environment lacks the richness required for the development of concepts in them.

Bernstein (1971), whose idea of the 'restricted' and 'elaborated' codes has been referred to earlier (1.8), also conducted experiments on the effects of the home and class structure on working-class children. He pointed out the differences between working-class and middle-class parents in their use of language in socializing their children (Bernstein, 1973: 38). Working-class parents, according to him, use language for talking to or instructing their children without explaining its principles. Their children therefore learn language skills by understanding the operation involved. The middle-class children, on the other hand, have to learn both the operation and the principle.

Thus, the poor and ethnic minority learners' poor school performance is ascribed to his want of background experience, to his impoverished environment — in short, to his 'stimulus' and cultural deprivation. It is thought that there is a considerable difference in intelligence and language skills between the
ethnic minority and the dominant group children by the time they reach school. The differences tend to become more and more pronounced, resulting ultimately in 'cumulative deficits'.

4.3.3 The Institutional Deficit Theory

Developments in ancillary disciplines, positive attitudes to ethnic minority group culture, changes in the socio-economic status of ethnic minorities and failure of compensatory educational programmes shifted the reasons for the poor school performance of ethnic minority learners from their environment to the existing system of education. Compensatory Educational Programmes were criticized because they diverted the attention from real defects of the educational systems to the imagery defect of the minority child (e.g. Labov, 1972; Bernstein, 1971).

The school is thought of as "a cultural invention which serves primarily to prepare middle-class children to participate in their own cultural system" (Abrahams and Troike, 1972: 29). The dominant culture, it is discovered by the exponents of this theory, "sees school as institutions for the adaptation of children to its own myths" (D'Amari, 1979: 18). Textbooks based on the upper middle-class culture (Reissman, 1962; Swarsen, 1974; Kressel, 1974; Kundu, 1980a) often carry negative stereotypes of ethnic minorities (Dante, 1973; Elson, 1964; Harris, 1963; Marers, 1961; Olson, 1963; Blom, 1967). Existing tests and test materials also lean heavily on the middle-class culture. Davis (1948), Reissman (1962) and Taylor (1977) have questioned
the applicability of the existing intelligence and IQ tests to ethnic minority learners, for these are based on dominant culture. It is also thought that the middle-class children are not motivated to do well in examinations of IQ kind because of the general emphasis on success and competition in the middle class culture (Dolvan, 1956). Davis (1948) also points out that speed is affected by cultural attitudes concerning the importance or unimportance of speed, and by personality factors such as competitiveness, compulsiveness, exhibitionism and anxiety. Very often the use of the standard language or a dialect in the test material discriminates against bilingual and bidialectal learners (Taylor, 1977).

All these experiments display that disadvantaged learners have such features as language underdevelopment, depressed intellectual functioning, lack of conceptual richness and clarity, poor auditory and perceptual functioning, low motivation for learning, lowered self-esteem, etc. which mark them out from their advantaged counterparts. This has been widely corroborated by the comparatively lower performance of disadvantaged learners in tests conducted in different parts of the world. To cite a few instances, Parmee (1973) has indicated that American Indian learners score much lower than Anglo-Saxon learners in the Lorge-Thorndike Intelligence Test. Ansubel (1961) has shown that Maori students have lower scores than the Pakeha in standardized intelligence tests in New Zealand. De Vos and Wagastsum (1967: 250-263) cite some studies conducted in Japan.
where Buraku scored lower than the dominant class students on both scholastic achievement tests devised by the Ministry of Education and IQ tests. Rath (1979) has also revealed that Brahmin children are consistently better than SC/ST children in both comprehension and association of the three kinds of concepts, i.e. the scientific, the concrete, and the abstract, and are found to be superior in all the school subjects except drawing.

4.4 Educational programmes for the poor

All these differences are imputed to early cultural deprivation. It is found that a considerable difference in intelligence and language skills takes place between advantaged and disadvantaged children by the time they reach school and that the differences tend to become more and more pronounced in due course. Furthermore, in countries where multiple languages and cultures co-exist, the use of one dominant language as the medium of instruction leaves many minority and ethnic minority children illiterate in their mother tongues. This is said to be one of the main reasons for their poor performance.

A great number of educational programmes are being devised for the disadvantaged learners, which can be divided into two broad groups:

(a) Compensatory Educational Programmes; and
(b) General Educational Programmes.
These programmes are aimed at preventing or compensating for deficiencies among disadvantaged children. Their main objective is to remediate the deficiency in the disadvantaged learners caused by their home and social environment. Prevention of such deficiencies forms a part of compensation. Although complete prevention is impossible, partial prevention of deficiencies at the pre-school level will make the later task of compensation easy.

These programmes can further be divided into two categories: Preventive/Pre-school Compensatory Programmes and Remedial Compensatory Programmes. Preventive/Pre-school Compensatory Programmes are designed to prevent cultural deprivation before its onset in the life of a disadvantaged child. The main objective of Remedial Compensatory Programmes, however, is to remediate the deficit in disadvantaged children. These are given at different stages of their school career. The Pre-examination Coaching Programmes for SC/ST students in India is one such programme.

4.5 Approaches to the education of the Disadvantaged

The attitudes of dominant groups to the education of the disadvantaged and ethnic minorities have undergone the following three distinct stages of change:

4.5.1 The 'Melting-pot' approach

The stage envisaged in accordance with the 'melting pot' approach is marked by an emphasis on assimilation. The ethnic minorities and the immigrants are expected to be completely assimilated into the mainstream dominant culture, forgetting their
own culture and heritage. There was a consensus in USA that the acculturation and assimilation of the Indians needed first the destruction of their culture. American-Indian children were taken out of their homes and put in hostels to avoid exposure to the traditional ways of their people (Officer, 1964). This tendency declined after 1900 and was formally abandoned by the Indian Reorganization Act 1934. Similar tendencies existed in other countries too. In UK, during 1960-1965, schools were expected to perform the important social role of helping the immigrants become assimilated into the British society by teaching them the English language and social conventions (Ogbu, 1978). Attempts were also made to assimilate the ethnic minorities and immigrants into the mainstream culture in New Zealand, Japan, France and Australia. The approach has failed, however, and, in spite of all attempts at assimilation, the 'melting' has not taken place and the ethnic minorities have maintained and asserted their linguistic and cultural identity.

4.5.2 The Philanthropic approach

On humanitarian grounds also measures are taken to remedy the early deficiency of the disadvantaged child. This has paved the way to a number of 'cultural enrichment' programmes, of which Compensatory Educational Programmes are a part. But, unfortunately enough, this approach has failed to recognize the cultural integrity of the disadvantaged and the ethnic minorities and is often criticised as ethnocentric because it is based on the
assumption that "culturally different means culturally deficient" (Abrahams and Troike, 1972: 3).

4.5.3 The Salad Bowl approach

The Salad Bowl approach to the problem of ethnic minorities is marked by a tendency to integrate, keeping the minority culture and heritage intact (Saville-Troike, 1976). Two factors are responsible for this approach: the rise of the minorities demanding a separate cultural integrity, and the development of a positive attitude to their culture. Ethnic revitalization movements have taken place in various parts of the world. As a result of the Negroes' agitation for their rights in America, for example, their racial identity and pride have found expression in their slogan 'Black is Beautiful' and their criticism of their elders who dreamt of "waking up white ..." (Jones, 1966).

The stress has been laid on the 'overlooked positives' of disadvantaged cultures. Reissman (1962) has discovered certain plus points such as cooperativeness, mutual aid, equalitarianism, informality, freedom from self-blame and parental over-protection and warm humour, in the culture of the disadvantaged. Negro English is found to be as grammatical as Standard English. Labov (1969) criticised the notion of verbal deprivation among Negro children and found their culture 'highly verbal' instead. Billie Davis (1972) has also found positive cultural features — such as non-material values, an interest in reading, learning, loving God
and enjoying poetry — in the migrant experience. This transformed attitude to the disadvantaged is at the root of the present cultural approach to their education.

4.5.4 Cultural approach

The culture of a people includes all the systems, techniques and tools which make up their way of life. It includes both material and non-material or expressive cultures. Language is both a part of a culture and a means of encoding and transmitting cultural information. Both culture and language exert a great influence on the members of a community, conditioning their way of looking at the world, as enunciated in the Sapir–Whorf Hypothesis. Whorf has proved this fact citing evidences from the Hopi language. To him thinking is not psychological but cultural (Carroll, 1962). The English, for example, think of abstractions as perceptible things; thus, they have no difficulty in understanding expressions like 'flight of fancy' or 'in the grip of fear' because their language has already conditioned them to think of abstract notions as entities.

When the language and culture have so great an influence on the speaker, innumerable problems are caused if the educational system is based on a culture different from that of the learner and the medium of instruction is not the mother tongue. With most disadvantaged and the ethnic minority children, this is always the case. In some cases, when the mother tongue is not different from the language of instruction, it is a different dialect.
fact also often leads to cultural conflicts, which are cited as the major variables responsible for poor school performance.

As Bryde (1968) confides, the American educational system, based on the middle-class values of reward and punishment, does not motivate the American-Indian pupil and leads to value conflicts. The classroom becomes a battle ground for conflicting values. A Black child may be listening attentively, but to his White middle-class teacher, who conceives anything less than complete silence as a sign of inattentiveness, he gives the appearance of distraction because of his different habit of directing his gaze. It works the other way too. When the White teacher speaks in a loud voice to call for order, the Negro pupil interprets this as an expression of anger.

Realizing the importance of culture in education, Selam and Selam (1973) have proposed the following six realities that the school should consider while teaching culturally different children:

(i) Culture influences every aspect of learning; how an individual feels about himself influences what he learns and how he behaves.
(ii) Culture influences ways of establishing rapport.
(iii) Culture influences communication.
(iv) Culture influences what educational variables are going to be effective.
(v) Culture influences value orientation.
(vi) Culture affects teaching methods.
4.5.5 **Significance of the cultural approach**

A careful analysis of the above-mentioned approaches reveals that the cultural approach has greater relevance in teaching language. As language and culture are inseparable, the teaching of language involves the teaching of culture. Problems arise, however, when the culture of the target language is in conflict with the learner's own language and culture. The learning of the target language can best be promoted by learning the culture, of which it is a part. But this approach has the danger of dislocating the learner from his own cultural environment. This danger is more pronounced in an English class which has made many feel that the English class is 'out of joint' (Graham, 1967) and triggers dropout (Byerly, 1963). Kressel (1974) has displayed how most of the 'textbook families' in existing TEFL textbooks are urban White middle-class families whose members are well-equipped with clothes, books, toys, ticket for cinemas and zoos, which are beyond the cultural experience of the disadvantaged children who grow up in a different kind of atmosphere. This often makes them feel uneasy and ashamed of their own family background.

It is against these odds that the disadvantaged learners — SC/ST students in our case — have to learn English because an adequate control of English is a major factor in their upward mobility and an agent of status equalization. The acquisition of English has become necessary for their social survival. What Spolsky (1972: 22) says about the need of English for American
Indian students is largely true of most disadvantaged learners:

At present the education of the Indian student depends to a very great extent on how efficiently he is taught English and how well he is able to learn it.

Davis (1972) expresses surprise at the fact that an 'adequate control of English' has not been regarded as one of the social rights in America. In other countries also, where it is not the national language, its need cannot be denied. It is important as an international language which serves as a 'window' on the outside world.

4.6 How to identify the learners' proficiency

There seem to be at least two ways in which the language proficiency of a particular learner or a group of learners can be located on the proficiency continuum. The first method obliges the researcher himself to frame a scheme with the help of a set of operational instruments like instructions in the question paper, guidelines to the examiners and the scoring key and then formulate a hierarchical category of learners. The second method places the learner's language output against any one or more of the existing established proficiency rating scales. Some examples of such scales are those devised by the Council of Europe, the American Council on the teaching of foreign languages, the Interagency Language Roundtable, the Australian Second Language Proficiency Ratings, Duncan's Range Test.

4.7 Our investigation

The method used to identify learners' proficiency in the present study is a combination of the two methods mentioned
above. The purpose of such a combination is to evolve a working framework suitable for the learners investigated for the present study. An experimental survey or study on inter- or intra-national basis may not accommodate a particular group of learners which has some regional, ethnic, cultural and/or linguistic features of its own and which varies from the characteristic features of the sample group. It is presumed therefore that an adaptation of any of the aforesaid rating scales or similar taxonomies combined with the researcher's own scheme will be the best suited to accommodate the various proficiency levels of the learners.

4.7.1 The proficiency framework devised

Since the findings of this Chapter are based on an assessment of the students' English language composition, their language proficiency will be taken as it manifests itself in the answer scripts of proficiency test (given in Appendix). The proficiency test was conducted among the same sample group in the selected schools as described in 2.3 and 2.6. The aim was to know the learning competence and range of learning English by SC/ST learners. Non-SC/ST pupils were taken as control group. We also aimed at comparing the performance in English of SC/ST and non-SC/ST students to test the assumption that SC/ST learners lag behind their advantaged counterparts in respect of their competence in English. Moreover, we wanted to identify some specific problems of SCs/STs in learning English, which may be responsible for their poor performance.
The Test had five sections. Section I contained 12 items (Questions 1 to 11 and 17) intended to test the knowledge of grammar, with 10 points. Section II had 7 items (Questions 18 to 24) and aimed at examining the knowledge and use of vocabulary, with 10 points. Section III consisted of 6 items (Questions 12 to 16, and 25), the purpose of which was to test comprehension, with 10 points. Sections IV and V had one item each (Questions 26 and 27) and were administered in order to evaluate proficiency in composition and translation respectively, with 10 marks each.

In preparing the test on vocabulary and grammar, the items were taken from the textbook of Class X to ensure that pupils were already acquainted with them. For preparing the test of translation some ten structures were selected from their syllabus. They were to be translated into English. For composition, a simple topic "The Things You Did Today in the Morning" was given. For comprehension, the Cloze Test devised by the CIEFL, Hyderabad and six phrases from their textbook were given. Three sections, i.e. the Sections I, III and V were evaluated by the researcher himself whereas for composition pieces, where there was room for subjective evaluation, he sought the help of two other examiners, and the mean score of all the three awards was worked out.

To find out whether each group differed sufficiently in competence, difference (significant or nonsignificant) has been obtained through critical ratio (CR) with the help of the following equation:
CR = \frac{\bar{X}_1 - \bar{X}_2}{\sqrt{\frac{\sigma^2_1}{N_1} + \frac{\sigma^2_2}{N_2}}}

in which

\bar{X}_1 = the mean of the first group
\bar{X}_2 = the mean of the second group
\sigma^2_1 = the standard deviation of the first group
\sigma^2_2 = the standard deviation of the second group

N_1 and N_2 = total number of students in the first and second group respectively.

4.7.2 Analysis of data

Tables 4.1 and 4.2 and Fig. 4.1 throw significant light on the performance of Non-SC/ST, SC, and ST learners in respect of grammatical items. Non-SC/ST students have higher mean than SC and ST students (Non-SC/ST: 5.27; SC: 4.43; and ST: 5.03). The critical ratio between Non-SC/ST and SC is 3.10, p < .01 whereas in the case of Non-SC/ST and ST it is only .94, p > .05, and between SC and ST it is 2.39, p < .05.

**TABLE 4.1**
Performance in Grammar

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S.No.</th>
<th>Category</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Total Score</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Non-SC/ST</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>791</td>
<td>5.27</td>
<td>2.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>SC</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>664</td>
<td>4.43</td>
<td>2.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>ST</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>755</td>
<td>5.03</td>
<td>2.04</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Fig. 4.1: Mean of Competence in Grammar

Fig. 4.2: Mean of Competence in Comprehension
### TABLE 4.2

Statistical Values Obtained for Performance in Grammar

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S.No.</th>
<th>Pairs compared</th>
<th>$D(\bar{X}_1-\bar{X}_2)$</th>
<th>CR</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Non-SC/ST vs SC</td>
<td>0.84</td>
<td>3.10</td>
<td>.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Non-SC/ST vs ST</td>
<td>0.24</td>
<td>0.94</td>
<td>n.s.*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>SC vs ST</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>2.39</td>
<td>.05</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* n.s. = not significant

Our subjects' competence in comprehension can be deciphered from Tables 4.3 and 4.4 and Fig. 4.2. The mean scores of Non-SC/ST, SC and ST subjects are 3.31, 2.22 and 2.24 respectively. The CR between Non-SC/ST and SC is 4.33, p < .01 and between Non-SC/ST and ST 4.36, p < .01 whereas between SC and ST it is only 0.10, p > .05.

### TABLE 4.3

Performance in Comprehension

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S.No.</th>
<th>Category</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Total Score</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Non-SC/ST</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>496</td>
<td>3.31</td>
<td>2.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>SC</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>335.5</td>
<td>2.22</td>
<td>1.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>ST</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>336</td>
<td>2.24</td>
<td>1.68</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### TABLE 4.4

Statistical Values Obtained for Competence in Comprehension

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S.No.</th>
<th>Pairs compared</th>
<th>$D(\bar{X}_1-\bar{X}_2)$</th>
<th>CR</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Non-SC/ST vs SC</td>
<td>1.09</td>
<td>4.33</td>
<td>.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Non-SC/ST vs ST</td>
<td>1.07</td>
<td>4.36</td>
<td>.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>SC vs ST</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>n.s.*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* n.s. = not significant.
The mean scores given in Tables 4.5 and 4.6 and Fig. 4.3 clearly show that Non-SC/ST learners' performance in vocabulary items is far better than that of SC and ST learners. The mean scores of Non-SC/ST, SC and ST learners are 4.5, 2.90 and 2.49 respectively. The CRs between Non-SC/ST and SC, Non-SC/ST and ST, and SC and ST groups are: 5.72, p .01; 7.72, p .01; and 1.66, p .05 respectively.

**TABLE 4.5**

Competence in Vocabulary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S.No.</th>
<th>Category</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Total Score</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Non-SC/ST</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>676.5</td>
<td>4.51</td>
<td>2.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>SC</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>435.5</td>
<td>2.90</td>
<td>2.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>ST</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>374.00</td>
<td>2.49</td>
<td>1.94</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TABLE 4.6**

Statistical Values Obtained for Competence in Vocabulary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S.No.</th>
<th>Pairs compared</th>
<th>D($\bar{X}_1-\bar{X}_2$)</th>
<th>CR</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Non-SC/ST vs. SC</td>
<td>1.61</td>
<td>5.72</td>
<td>.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Non-SC/ST vs. ST</td>
<td>2.02</td>
<td>7.72</td>
<td>.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>SC vs. ST</td>
<td>0.41</td>
<td>1.66</td>
<td>n.s.*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* n.s. = not significant

Tables 4.7 and 4.8 and Fig. 4.4 reveal the competence of our subjects in composition. All the learners' performance in this component was deplorably poor. The mean scores of Non-SC/ST,
Fig. 4.3: Mean of Competence in Vocabulary

Fig. 4.4: Mean of Competence in Composition
SC and ST learners are 1.65, 0.67 and 0.85 respectively. The CR between Non-SC/ST and SC is 4.30, p < .01, and in the case of Non-SC/ST and SC, it is 3.37, p < .01 and between SC and ST learners is just 1.06, p > .05.

**TABLE 4.7**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S.No.</th>
<th>Category</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Total Score</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Non-SC/ST</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>247</td>
<td>1.65</td>
<td>2.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>SC</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>0.67</td>
<td>1.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>ST</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>0.85</td>
<td>1.57</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TABLE 4.8**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S.No.</th>
<th>Pairs compared</th>
<th>D((\bar{X}_1-\bar{X}_2))</th>
<th>CR</th>
<th>P</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Non-SC/ST Vs. SC</td>
<td>0.98</td>
<td>4.30</td>
<td>.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Non-SC/ST Vs. ST</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>3.37</td>
<td>.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>SC Vs. ST</td>
<td>0.18</td>
<td>1.06</td>
<td>n.s.*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* n.s. = not significant.

An idea of the competence of Non-SC/ST, SC, and ST pupils in translation items can be had from Tables 4.9 and 4.10 and Fig. 4.5. On the whole, the performance of our subjects in this part of the test is not satisfactory. The SC pupils scored lowest (\(\bar{X} = 1.07\)) whereas ST learners scored a mean of 1.74. Though the Non-SC/ST students obtained a mean of 2.09, their performance is
Fig. 4.5: Mean of Competence in Translation
also not significant. The critical ratio between Non-SC/ST and SC learners is 3.97, \( p < .01 \), whereas the CRs between Non-SC/ST and ST, and SC and ST are 1.38, \( p > .05 \) and 3.26, \( p < .01 \) respectively.

### TABLE 4.9

Competence in Translation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S.No.</th>
<th>Category</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Total Score</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Non-SC/ST</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>313</td>
<td>2.09</td>
<td>2.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>SC</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>1.07</td>
<td>1.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>ST</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>261</td>
<td>1.74</td>
<td>2.19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### TABLE 4.10

Statistical Values Obtained for Competence in Translation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S.No.</th>
<th>Pairs compared</th>
<th>( D(X_1 - X_2) )</th>
<th>CR</th>
<th>( p )</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Non-SC/ST vs. SC</td>
<td>1.02</td>
<td>3.97</td>
<td>.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Non-SC/ST vs. ST</td>
<td>0.35</td>
<td>1.38</td>
<td>n.s.*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>SC vs. ST</td>
<td>0.67</td>
<td>3.26</td>
<td>.01</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* n.s. = not significant

Tables 4.11 and 4.12 and Fig. 4.6 sum up the overall performance of our subjects. The mean scores of Non-SC/ST, SC and ST groups are 16.98, 11.49 and 12.26 respectively. The Critical ratio between Non-SC/ST and SC is 2.90, \( p < .01 \). While the CR between Non-SC/ST and ST learners is 3.40, \( p < .01 \), it is 0.59, \( p > .05 \) between SC and ST groups.
Fig. 4.6: Mean of Overall Performance
TABLE 4.11

Over-all Performance of the Subjects

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S.No.</th>
<th>Category</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Total Score</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Non-SC/ST</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>2547.5</td>
<td>16.98</td>
<td>9.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>SC</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>1723.5</td>
<td>11.49</td>
<td>7.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>ST</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>1839.5</td>
<td>12.26</td>
<td>6.26</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TABLE 4.12

Statistical Values Obtained for the Over-all Performance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S.No.</th>
<th>Pairs compared</th>
<th>D((\overline{X}_1-\overline{X}_2))</th>
<th>CR</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Non-SC/ST Vs. SC</td>
<td>5.49</td>
<td>2.90</td>
<td>.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Non-SC/ST Vs. ST</td>
<td>4.72</td>
<td>3.40</td>
<td>.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>SC Vs. ST</td>
<td>0.77</td>
<td>0.59</td>
<td>n.s.*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* n.s. = not significant

4.8 Findings and Discussion

Some of the findings of the analysis of the scores and valuation of the test scripts are given below:

(1) During the administration of the test, the researcher observed that most of the SC/ST students were unable to complete their tests within the prescribed time limit, whereas the Non-SC/ST learners completed them early and submitted their scripts well in time. This may partly be due to the over-cautious nature of most SC/ST pupils and their lack of test-taking skills. The poor self-image of SC/ST can also be attributed as one of the possible causes.
(ii) Tables 4.11 and 4.12 and Fig. 4.6 prove our assumption beyond doubt that SC and ST learners lag behind Non-SC/ST students in respect of their competence in English. In the over-all performance, Non-SC/ST pupils had almost a double score in comparison with those of SC and ST subjects. The SC learners were found to be the weakest of all in all components except vocabulary. They scored only a total of 1723.5 marks out 7500/- which works out to 23%, while their advantaged counterparts obtained a total of 2547.5 marks (34%). The performance of tribal learners also, who scored a total of 1839.5 marks (25%), was not significantly different from that of the SC group.

The over-all performance of even the Non-SC/ST group cannot be said to be really satisfactory. Table 4.12 clearly indicates the differences between the competence of Non-SC/ST and SC (CR = 2.90, p < .01) and between Non-SC/ST and ST (CR = 3.40, p < .01) groups. The difference between SC and ST learners is not significant (CR = 0.59, p > .05). The competence of SC learners and ST pupils in English is thus more or less the same. The reasons for the low competence of SC/ST learners are manifold. These will be considered in the last chapter in some detail.

(iii) The level of competence of each group in different components is illustrated in Fig. 4.7. All the subjects scored fairly well in grammar (Non-SC/ST: 52.73%, SC: 44.27%, and ST: 50.33%). The least scoring portion was composition (Non-SC/ST: 16.47%, SC: 6.67%, and ST: 8.47%). The figures also reveal that among these three groups, SC learners have the lowest competence in almost in all components.
Fig. 4.7: Learners' Competence at a Glance
(iv) When we come to specific areas of competence, we find that all the subjects had a reasonably good command over grammar. This may be due to the value attached by teachers to the teaching of grammar.

In comprehension, the difference of competence between SC learners and their ST counterparts is not significant (of Tables 4.3 and 4.4). While the tribal learners scored 336 marks (22.4%), the Scheduled Caste learners got 333.5 (22.3%). But their advantaged counterparts obtained 496 marks (33.07). It may be said that there exists a great difference in regard to competence in comprehension between Non-SC/ST and SC (CR = 4.33, p < .01) and Non-SC/ST and ST learners (CR = 4.36, p < .01) and that the difference between SC and ST students is not significant (CR = .10, p > .05).

Non-SC/ST learners performed well in vocabulary (45.13%) in comparison to the disadvantaged groups (SC = 29.07%; ST = 24.93%). It is only in vocabulary items that SC learners secured more than their tribal brethren, but the difference of competence between these two groups is nonsignificant (CR = 1.66, p > .05) (Table 4.6). The analysis of composition sheets revealed that most of the SC and ST students used prepositions where they were not required. For instance, they frequently used 'called to me', 'met with me', 'told to me', etc. This may be due to the interference of the type of Hindi they speak.

Our SC and ST learners' poor performance in composition can be ascribed to the learners themselves. As many as 59% SC
and 57% ST learners did not attempt the composition question. The textbook families (discussed in 4.5.5) have created in them a negative attitude towards their own families, atmosphere and their daily routine. They could not have written honestly about their families and routine without revealing grim facts. Their own nature may also be held responsible, for many of them left the spaces blank when they failed to provide a satisfactory answer. But this was not the case with most Non-SC/ST students. They never left the space blank and wrote something whether it was right or wrong. The following three answers reproduced verbatim reveal how attitudes to their routines influenced their responses and indirectly, their performance in English:

I get up at 5 o'clock in the morning. Then I am studying for two hours. At 7-30 I will go to bath. Then I have take tea and breakefast and come to the school. Then our assembly has been started. Two periods later there is ten minutes break. We drink water, Today at 4th period later (at 10 o'clock) our practical exam is started. I am ready for practical exam.

(a Non-SC/ST learner. Roll No. 001).

I am work up in Morning going to Ground Retaron to cow is bring in ground and bothing. There is learnin in My book and Reding all work. The going to Santipara School Batali. I am Making an houses. I am bothing to Nineth time. It is a teken a tea.

(a SC student. Roll No. 335)

I walked in an 5 o'clock. I made my hair. I have went to the bathroom. Then I do the brush. I am cleaning my mouth hand and legs. then I burned the wood. I am clean the home and plats. Then I cooking food and clean the plats. Then I am starting of my Study.

(a ST girl student. Roll No. 317).
SC students performed poorly in exercises given for translation (10.67%), while ST pupils' performance was somewhat better (17.4%). The difference in competence between Non-SC/ST and ST learners is not significant (CR = 1.38, p > .05), but there is considerable difference in this regard between SC and ST group (CR = 3.26, p < .01).

Thus the competence of SC and ST learners in respect of various components, like grammar, vocabulary, composition and translation, *via a via* that of the control group cannot be taken to be satisfactory. For want of a better way, their competence in English has been determined on the basis of their performance. In shaping the learner's competence/performance, his learning strategies play a crucial role. The SC and ST learners' learning strategies will be considered in the next chapter.