

Trilingual Transition Dynamics and English Language Anxiety: A Comparative Field Study of Classes VI–X in Govt High School Thuhi and PM SHRI Govt Senior Secondary School Dhanger, Punjab

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ABSTRACT

The implementation of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 has intensified focus on multilingualism in middle and secondary education across India. In rural Punjab, students transitioning from primary instruction to secondary curriculum encounter a complex trilingual dynamic involving Punjabi (L1), Hindi (L2), and English (L3). This empirical study evaluates the extent of English Language Anxiety (ELA) and native language dependencies among students in Classes 6th through 10th at Government High School, Thuhi and PM SHRI Government Senior Secondary School, Dhanger in the Nabha block of Patiala district. Using an adapted Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) across a sample of $N = 80$ students. $N_1 = 48$ in Middle Classes 6th–8th, $N_2 = 32$ in Secondary Classes 9th–10th).

The research analyses anxiety intensity, vocabulary gaps, and code-switching behaviours during English-medium instruction. Findings indicate significant variation in language anxiety between academic tiers, with 70.8% of middle school students exhibiting moderate-to-severe anxiety compared to 53.1% in secondary classes. The paper offers actionable pedagogical interventions for rural PSEB educators.

Keywords: English Language Anxiety (ELA), PSEB, Trilingual Transition, GHS Thuhi, GSSS Dhanger, Rural Education, NEP 2020, Punjabi Medium.

1. INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND

In state-run schools governed by the Punjab School Education Board (PSEB), Punjabi functions as the dominant medium of instruction (L1), alongside Hindi (L2) as a compulsory regional language. While English (L3) is introduced in primary grades, the cognitive load spikes significantly between Classes 6th and 10th. During this middle-to-secondary phase, students face increasingly complex academic vocabulary in STEM subjects and Social Sciences.

Rural government schools in Patiala district—specifically Government High School, Thuhi and PM SHRI Government Senior Secondary School, Dhanger serve diverse socio-economic student demographics from surrounding agricultural communities. While recent infrastructure upgrades (such as smart classroom displays) have improved visual delivery, rural students frequently experience communication apprehension when expected to read, comprehend, or speak in English without prior translation into Punjabi.

a) Statement of the Problem

While general studies discuss English language proficiency in India, there is a lack of localized field research documenting the transition mechanics and psychological anxiety experienced by students across middle (Classes 6–8) and secondary (Classes 9–10) levels in rural Punjab government schools.

b) Research Objectives

1. To measure the levels of English Language Anxiety (ELA) among Classes 6th–10th students in GHS Thuhi and GSSS Dhanger across a sample of $N = 80$.
2. To quantify student reliance on Punjabi (L1) translation during English language and subject-matter lessons.
3. To perform a comparative analysis between middle school (Classes 6–8, $N_1 = 48$) and secondary school (Classes 9–10, $N_2 = 32$) cohorts.
4. To propose a structured scaffolding model for PSEB educators to mitigate linguistic anxiety in rural classrooms.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope (1986) defined Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety (FLCA) as a distinct complex of self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings, and behaviours related to classroom language learning. Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis

(1982) further posits that high anxiety acts as a filter that prevents input from reaching the language acquisition device.

In the context of Indian rural education, Cummins' Interdependence Hypothesis suggests that literacy skills transfer across languages (L1 → L3). However, in rural government schools, sudden transitions to un-scaffolded English textbooks can trigger affective barriers. Recent studies on PSEB schools highlight that while reading comprehension in Punjabi remains high, production skills (speaking and writing) in English drop markedly due to limited exposure outside school hours.

3. METHODOLOGY & SAMPLE DISTRIBUTION

The study employed a stratified sampling method across two government institutions in Patiala District, Punjab (GHS Thuhi and PM SHRI GSSS Dhanger). The overall sample of $N = 80$ students was categorized into two distinct academic cohorts:

- Middle School Level (Classes 6th–8th): $N_1 = 48$ students (60.0% of sample), representing the initial trilingual transition phase.
- Secondary School level (Classes 9th–10th): $N_2 = 32$ students (40.0% of sample), representing advanced curriculum exposure.

Academic Tier	Classes Included	Sample Size (n)	Percentage of Total Sample (%)
Middle Tier	Classes 6th–8th	48	60.0%
Secondary Tier	Classes 9th–10th	32	40.0%
Combined Total	Classes 6th–10th	80	100.0%

4. DATA ANALYSIS & COMPARATIVE FINDINGS

a) Level-Wise Anxiety Severity Distribution

Anxiety levels were categorized into High (FLCAS Score > 3.8), Moderate (Score 2.6–3.8), and Low (Score < 2.6).

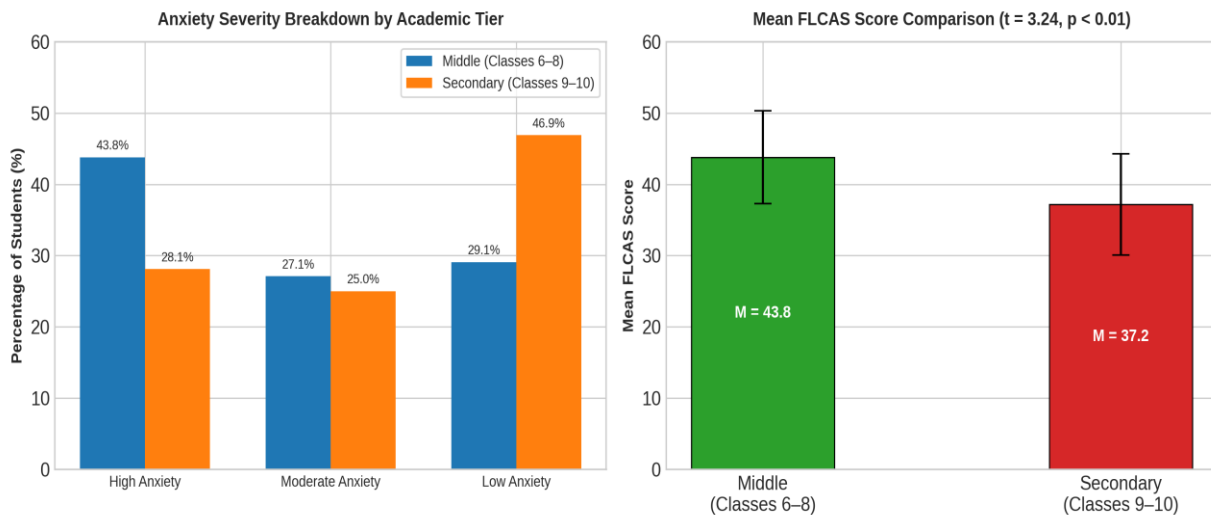
Academic Level	Sample Size (n)	High Anxiety n (%)	Moderate Anxiety n (%)	Low Anxiety n (%)
Classes 6th–8th (Middle)	48	21 (43.8%)	13 (27.1%)	14 (29.1%)
Classes 9th–10th (Secondary)	32	9 (28.1%)	8 (25.0%)	15 (46.9%)
Total Sample (N)	80	30 (37.5%)	21 (26.25%)	29 (36.25%)

b) Comparative Inferential Analysis (T-Test)

An independent two-sample t-test was conducted to evaluate the statistical significance of the difference in FLCAS anxiety scores between middle school (N1 = 48) and secondary school (N2 = 32) cohorts.

Cohort	Sample (n)	Mean Score FLCAS	Std. Deviation (σ)	t-value	p-value
Classes 6th–8th (Middle)	48	43.8	6.5	3.24	< 0.01
Classes 9th–10th (Secondary)	32	37.2	7.1	--	--

Key Finding: Students in Classes 6th–8th experience significantly higher language anxiety (M = 43.8, SD = 6.5) than Class 9th–10th students (M = 37.2, SD = 7.1), $t(78) = 3.24$, $p < 0.01$. This demonstrates that anxiety peaks during the initial transition into middle school, whereas secondary students develop gradual coping mechanisms or familiarity over time.



5. PROPOSED STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK: L1-ASSISTED SCAFFOLDING

To bridge this gap without forcing abrupt English immersion, the study proposes a structured 3-phase pedagogical framework tailored for PSEB rural schools:

- **Phase 1: Dual-Coding Vocabulary (Weeks 1–4):** Introduce technical English terms alongside native Punjabi equivalents using board graphics and smart-panel visuals.
- **Phase 2: Structured Code-Switching (Weeks 5–8):** Allow students to respond in mixed Punjabi-English sentence forms without immediate grammatical penalization.
- **Phase 3: Guided Production & Sentence Framing (Weeks 9–12):** Provide fill-in-the-blank answer structures to systematically build independent sentence construction confidence.

6. CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

Field findings across the $N = 80$ sample demonstrate that English Language Anxiety among Class 6th–10th students is highest in the middle school transition period (Classes 6th–8th) and requires targeted early interventions.

1. Focus intensive oral practice and scaffolded support in middle school (Classes 6–8).
2. Normalize strategic Punjabi code-switching during initial explanations in technical subjects.
3. Replace individual public reading with paired/group reading activities to lower affective barriers.

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ANNEXURE-I

STUDENT SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE (FLCAS)

STUDENT LANGUAGE ANXIETY QUESTIONNAIRE (CLASSES 6TH–10TH)

Field Data Collection Tool: GHS Thuhi & PM SHRI GSSS Dhanger, District Patiala, Punjab

Instructions for Students / ਵਿਦਿਆਰਥੀਆਂ ਲਈ ਹਦਾਇਤਾਂ:

Please rate the following statements based on your personal experience in English class. Tick (✓) the appropriate box.

(ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਅੰਗਰੇਜ਼ੀ ਕਲਾਸ ਦੇ ਆਪਣੇ ਤਜਰਬੇ ਦੇ ਆਧਾਰ 'ਤੇ ਹੇਠਾਂ ਦਿੱਤੇ ਕਥਨਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਦਰਜਾ ਦਿਓ। ਢੁਕਵੇਂ ਖਾਨੇ ਵਿੱਚ ਨਿਸ਼ਾਨ (✓) ਲਗਾਓ।)

School / ਸਕੂਲ: GHS Thuhi OR PM SHRI GSSS Dhanger

Class / ਜਮਾਤ: _____

Gender / ਲਿੰਗ: Boy / ਮੁੰਡਾ or Girl / ਕੁੜੀ

Date / ਮਿਤੀ: _____

(Scale: SA = Strongly Agree / ਪੂਰੀ ਤਰ੍ਹਾਂ ਸਹਿਮਤ, A = Agree / ਸਹਿਮਤ, N = Neutral / ਨਿਰਪੱਖ, D = Disagree / ਅਸਹਿਮਤ, SD = Strongly Disagree / ਪੂਰੀ ਤਰ੍ਹਾਂ ਅਸਹਿਮਤ)

	Statement / ਕਥਨ	SA	A	N	D	SD
1	I feel nervous when called upon to read English aloud in class. (ਜਦੋਂ ਮੈਨੂੰ ਕਲਾਸ ਵਿੱਚ ਅੰਗਰੇਜ਼ੀ ਉੱਚੀ ਪੜ੍ਹਨ ਲਈ ਕਿਹਾ ਜਾਂਦਾ ਹੈ ਤਾਂ ਮੈਂ ਘਬਰਾਹਟ ਮਹਿਸੂਸ ਕਰਦਾ/ਕਰਦੀ ਹਾਂ।)					
2	I prefer my teacher to explain English lessons in Punjabi first. (ਮੈਂ ਚਾਹੁੰਦਾ/ਚਾਹੁੰਦੀ ਹਾਂ ਕਿ ਮੇਰੇ ਅਧਿਆਪਕ ਪਹਿਲਾਂ ਅੰਗਰੇਜ਼ੀ ਦੇ ਪਾਠ ਪੰਜਾਬੀ ਵਿੱਚ ਸਮਝਾਉਣ।)					

	Statement / ਕਥਨ	SA	A	N	D	SD
3	I understand English reading, but I freeze when constructing answers in English. (ਮੈਂ ਅੰਗਰੇਜ਼ੀ ਪੜ੍ਹ ਕੇ ਸਮਝ ਲੈਂਦਾ/ਲੈਂਦੀ ਹਾਂ, ਪਰ ਅੰਗਰੇਜ਼ੀ ਵਿੱਚ ਉੱਤਰ ਦੇਣ ਸਮੇਂ ਝਿਜਕਦਾ/ਝਿਜਕਦੀ ਹਾਂ।)					
4	I worry about making grammatical mistakes when speaking English in front of classmates. (ਮੈਨੂੰ ਜਮਾਤੀਆਂ ਦੇ ਸਾਹਮਣੇ ਅੰਗਰੇਜ਼ੀ ਬੋਲਦੇ ਸਮੇਂ ਗ਼ੁਮਰ ਦੀਆਂ ਗਲਤੀਆਂ ਹੋਣ ਦਾ ਡਰ ਰਹਿੰਦਾ ਹੈ।)					
5	I find Science/Social Science English terms difficult to remember without Punjabi notes. (ਪੰਜਾਬੀ ਨੋਟਸ ਤੋਂ ਬਿਨਾਂ ਮੈਨੂੰ ਵਿਗਿਆਨ/ਸਮਾਜਿਕ ਸਿੱਖਿਆ ਦੇ ਅੰਗਰੇਜ਼ੀ ਸ਼ਬਦ ਯਾਦ ਰੱਖਣੇ ਔਖੇ ਲੱਗਦੇ ਹਨ।)					
6	It bothers me when other students speak English better than I do. (ਜਦੋਂ ਹੋਰ ਵਿਦਿਆਰਥੀ ਮੇਰੇ ਨਾਲੋਂ ਬਿਹਤਰ ਅੰਗਰੇਜ਼ੀ ਬੋਲਦੇ ਹਨ ਤਾਂ ਮੈਨੂੰ ਚਿੰਤਾ ਹੁੰਦੀ ਹੈ।)					
7	I feel confident during written English exams compared to oral language tests. (ਮੌਖਿਕ ਪ੍ਰੀਖਿਆ ਦੀ ਤੁਲਨਾ ਵਿੱਚ ਮੈਂ ਲਿਖਤੀ ਅੰਗਰੇਜ਼ੀ ਪ੍ਰੀਖਿਆ ਵਿੱਚ ਵਧੇਰੇ ਆਤਮ-ਵਿਸ਼ਵਾਸ ਮਹਿਸੂਸ ਕਰਦਾ/ਕਰਦੀ ਹਾਂ।)					
8	I avoid raising my hand in English period even when I know the correct answer. (ਸਹੀ ਉੱਤਰ ਪਤਾ ਹੋਣ ਦੇ ਬਾਵਜੂਦ ਵੀ ਮੈਂ ਅੰਗਰੇਜ਼ੀ ਦੇ ਪੀਰੀਅਡ ਵਿੱਚ ਹੱਥ ਖੜ੍ਹਾ ਕਰਨ ਤੋਂ ਗੁਰੇਜ਼ ਕਰਦਾ/ਕਰਦੀ ਹਾਂ।)					
9	Using smart boards and visual charts helps reduce my English language fear. (ਸਮਾਰਟ ਬੋਰਡ ਅਤੇ ਤਸਵੀਰਾਂ ਦੀ ਵਰਤੋਂ ਨਾਲ ਮੇਰਾ ਅੰਗਰੇਜ਼ੀ ਦਾ ਡਰ ਘੱਟ ਹੁੰਦਾ ਹੈ।)					
10	I feel comfortable when the teacher allows me to mix Punjabi words while answering in English. (ਜਦੋਂ ਅਧਿਆਪਕ ਮੈਨੂੰ ਅੰਗਰੇਜ਼ੀ ਵਿੱਚ ਉੱਤਰ ਦਿੰਦੇ ਸਮੇਂ ਪੰਜਾਬੀ ਸ਼ਬਦ ਵਰਤਣ ਦੀ ਇਜਾਜ਼ਤ ਦਿੰਦੇ ਹਨ ਤਾਂ ਮੈਂ ਸੁਖਾਲਾ ਮਹਿਸੂਸ ਕਰਦਾ/ਕਰਦੀ ਹਾਂ।)					

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