CHAPTER- 4
DATA DESCRIPTION

4.1 Introduction

With a view to examine and assess the writing component of English courses at the Intermediate level in Andhra Pradesh a survey has been conducted involving 667 students and 30 English lecturers. It is learnt that 85% of the total students who do their Intermediate in Andhra Pradesh do it from private Junior colleges and most of the meritorious students are found studying in private rather than government junior colleges. The brightest students even from the poorest sections of the society are found studying in corporate colleges through DRDA and other district level schemes. Bright students with a potential for excellence are also offered free education by the corporate institutions themselves. For all these reasons and also to limit the scope of the research, the present study has confined itself to corporate colleges in Andhra Pradesh. It has been learnt that among the corporate colleges, Sri Chaitanya, Narayana, Sri Gayathri and NRI Educational Institutions, have the highest number of students pursuing intermediate with them, which amounts to more than 20% of the total strength in the state.

As gaining access to the students and getting an hour of their time and getting appointment with the teachers was a herculean task in corporate colleges, the sample has confined itself to colleges of these four corporate institutions. These corporate institutions have several branches in each of the
three cities covered for the survey, namely, Hyderabad, Tirupati and Guntur. The students are grouped under different sections based on their objectives, that is, the sections are named LEO batch, Medicon batch, IIT, EAMCET depending on what entrance exam the students are keen on taking after their Intermediate. In order to make the sample geographically and merit-wise representative, it is ensured that students drawn for the sample form a cross section of all these batches.

30 bright rural students who studied in Telugu medium in government schools and joined Sri Chaitanya under DRDA scheme have also been included in the sample. All the students of the sample are from English medium though, 90 of them studied in Telugu medium upto 10\textsuperscript{th}, while 2 students took to English medium either from 6\textsuperscript{th} or 7\textsuperscript{th} standard. The students included for the sample also represent three different streams, namely, M.P.C, Bi.P.C and M.E.C, the three most popular groups at the Intermediate level.

4.2 Procedure adopted for the study

With a view to assess the writing of Intermediate students, a survey has been conducted. A students’ questionnaire and teachers’ questionnaire have been designed and a survey has been conducted. Data has been collected from the I and II year Intermediate students studying in private colleges from the three regions of Andhra Pradesh that is Andhra, Rayalaseema and Telangana. From Andhra region, Guntur; from Rayalaseema, Tirupati, and from Telangana, Hyderabad were chosen for data collection.
4.2a Pilot Study

To begin with, a pilot study was conducted at Sri Chaitanya Junior College in Tirupati. A common questionnaire was framed for both the I and II year students for the reason that the tasks that were given were based on what was familiar for them.

4.2b Questionnaire designed for the pilot study

The questionnaire began with preliminary information like the name of the student, the school in which they studied from 6th to 10th and the medium of instruction. This information about the medium of study at school was sought to see whether the performance of the students’ who studied in Telugu medium was any different from the one who studied in English medium. The next question was about the institution in which they were studying.

The questions were preceded by a general question on how they would rate their own writing skills. This question was given to test their own understanding of their performance.

The questionnaire comprises five writing tasks:

The first question is writing a paragraph with clues given. The students are given directions on what should go into the paragraph. The question is given below.
Q. no.1. Write about yourself in 10 lines. (You may write about your native place, parents, siblings, hobbies, schooling, reason for choosing your course, future plans etc).

The second question is a free composition where the student is free to think, choose the vocabulary, arrange the ideas and frame the sentences. The question is given below.

Q.no.2. Write a paragraph about your favorite movie. (10 lines)

The third task is arranging the jumbled sentences to form a coherent passage. Eight sentences are jumbled up. The students here have to look for linkers and rewrite the sentences into a coherent passage. The question is given below.

Q.no.3. Rewrite the jumbled up sentences to form a coherent passage.

(The Questionnaire is appended)

The fourth question is a picture description. The picture is given and the students have to see and describe their perception of it. As the saying goes: “A picture paints a thousand words”. A picture description is an ideal way of practicing vocabulary. Picture stimulates thinking. It tests fluency, vocabulary, stress, ability to communicate, grammatical accuracy and interactive communication. The question is given below.

Q. no. 4. Look at the picture below carefully and write what you think/feel about it. (The picture is found in the questionnaire appended)
The fifth task is related to listening. Ten factual sentences are read out to the students twice at a considerable pace. The students were asked to listen to them carefully and write grammatically correct sentences.

Q. no.5. Listen carefully to the ten sentences that would be read out to you and write them as you remember. (focus on the grammar/sentence structure) – Facts about India

On analyzing the data collected in the pilot study, it was found that most of the students could not answer task no.3 - rewriting the jumbled sentences to form a coherent passage. They found it hard to connect the sentences using linkers. So there was a change in the questionnaire with task no.3. It was replaced with a task consisting of 10 sentences with a blank, two options were given and students had to choose the right cohesive device and fill the blank.

4.3 Teachers’ questionnaire

Thirty teachers were asked to fill the questionnaire and some were interviewed.

Writing is a very difficult skill for learners to acquire. To understand what problems they have in writing, samples of L2 writing were collected and analyzed. Problems in writing could be because of pedagogical reasons. So research tools like questionnaires for students were used to test their ability to write and teachers and interviews with the teachers were used to gain insights
into teachers’ perception on teaching writing and what actually happens in the classroom.

4.3a Description of Teachers’ Questionnaire

A questionnaire was set for teachers to know what they opine about the present English syllabus, their perception of the trends of composition, their view towards teaching materials and the way writing is taught in their colleges and the changes they would like to bring about to improve their teaching performance and students’ performance.

The pre questionnaire sought the preliminary information from the teachers like their name, qualification and their teaching experience in years.

A questionnaire consisting of thirteen questions is designed, where ten questions are given with options and three open-ended questions where the teachers’ opinion had to be written down.

Q.No.1. “Does the present examination pattern test the writing skills adequately?”

This question enquires whether the writing skills that are prescribed in the text books and the work books are given enough weightage in the board examination and are they tested to know whether the students’ have acquired the same knowledge or not.
Q.No.2. If no, what changes should be made?

This question is a sequel to the previous one, if the teachers don’t find their answers in the options given they are asked to write down their views.

Q.No.3 Is writing skill given adequate weightage in the syllabus/textbooks?

(Yes/No)

If no, what other components are to be added?

The above question enquires regarding the weightage/importance given to ‘writing’ in the syllabus/textbooks. If the teacher feels, some more components can be added, he/she is asked to mention it.

Q.No.4 Do you focus adequately on teaching of writing skill in your teaching?

(Yes/No) If no, what are the hurdles?

This question tries to find from the teachers if they give enough priority on teaching writing as a skill.

Q.No.5 Writing skill is given more importance in the final examination (board examination).

This question seeks to find whether a writing skill is given enough importance.

Q.No.6 Do you think the present syllabus is better suited in teaching writing than the previous one?
This question aims to find if the teachers felt that the present syllabus focus more on teaching writing than the previous one.

Q.No.7 In a week, how many hours of teaching is allotted for English in your college?

A.______________hours

This question finds out the number of hours allotted for teaching English per week.

Q.No.8 How much time do you spend on teaching writing?

The questions the amount of time the teachers allotted in writing in the form of percentage.

Q.No.9 The writing skills of your students are

This question seeks the opinion of teachers about the writing skills of their students in the form of percentage.

Q. No. 10.Do you believe the prescribed syllabus caters to the needs of the students in improving their writing skills?

This question tries to know if the teachers felt that the present syllabus helps the students in improving their writing skills.

Q.No.11.Do you make the students work on the writing activities given at the end of every lesson?
The question enquires how frequently the students are made to work on writing activities.

Q.No.12 What do you think should be done to promote the writing of your students?

This question seeks the teachers’ advice on what should be done to contribute for the improvement of writing in students.

Q.No.13 Apart from the writing activities prescribed in the syllabus, are there any other activities you make your students do? If so please write them.

The questions mentioned above are the 13 questions meant to seek the information from the teachers.

4.4 Students’ Questionnaire

The students’ questionnaire is designed to test the writing skills of both the first and second year students of Intermediate. The questionnaire includes five written tasks. Each task is one of its kind and serves a different purpose in testing writing as a skill.

Prior to the writing tasks, preliminary information about the student has been sought like: their name, schooling details which provide whether they have studied and in which medium of instruction they have studied.
An opinion has been sought from the student on their performance in English, they are asked to rate their writing skills. Four options are given: Excellent, Good, Poor and Very poor.

This is followed by five writing tasks

The first task “Write about yourself in 10 lines.(you may write about our native place, parents, siblings, hobbies, schooling, reason for choosing your course, future plans etc)” tests the writing of the students with some clues given. The students are provided with some input/clues on how to construct the paragraph. The second task “Write a paragraph about your favourite movie. (10 lines) is an open ended task. The other tasks are the same as the ones used in the pilot survey.

4.5 Collection of data

4.5a. Places

Places that have been chosen for data collection from different regions of Andhra Pradesh are Guntur from Andhra, Tirupati from Rayalaseema and Hyderabad from Telangana. These three places have been chosen exclusively for the conveyance is easy and these places are the hubs of education. Maximum number of students from nearby places in those regions come for better education. The Corporate Institutions have obliged for data collection.

4.5b. Limitations

Of the constraints that have been faced while collecting the data, time and the number of students available were the prime ones.
Time has been a major constraint for the reason that Intermediate is a prime time in any students’ life. This period sets a bright future for the student who makes maximum use of this period. All the students in these institutions who have taken up courses like M.P.C and Bi.P.C come with a goal of taking admission in professional courses, so students tend to concentrate more on their subjects, except the languages and to be precise, English. The college managements too stress more on the other subjects apart from English. The time allotted for writing the tasks is 50-60 minutes. The managements have given permission for 50-60 minutes time for getting the five tasks of the students’ questionnaire answered, allotting 10 minutes for each task and 10 minutes to give instructions to the students and disseminating the questionnaires. In few places, the management expressed their unwillingness to spare the time asked for. The maximum time spared was 30 minutes. So the students could not answer all the tasks and such students have been excluded from the sample.

4.5c Classes

Both the first and second year classes have been divided based on the performance of the students, one is an average and the other is the brighter one. The class size has been varying from 40-70 and in some cases it was 80, boys, girls and a combination of both boys and girls. Guntur M.P.C and Bi.P.C batches were a combination of both boys and girls where as in Tirupati
and Hyderabad colleges, it was exclusively boys and girls. The data size at times has been less for the reason that the students’ attendance was less.

4.6 Interview with the teachers

An interview has been conducted with 30 teachers, a telephonic conversation with some and a face-to-face conversation with most of them. Teachers’ questionnaires were filled up over a period of two months as most of them were not available. Being reputed Institutions, good number of students from every part of Andhra Pradesh take admission into Intermediate courses, the institutions have many branches in places like Guntur, Hyderabad and Tirupati. Many of the English teachers were not available at the time of visit for the student survey for a single English teacher is allotted many classes in different branches in the same town/city. The teacher visits a college twice a week, taking classes for 3 hrs for Senior Intermediate and 3 hrs for Junior Intermediate.

4.6a. Teachers in Private colleges

Availability of the teachers is not possible for a single teacher has to handle many classes in different branches, their stay at one particular branch is not possible.

4.6a.i) Teachers’ limitations

Teachers in these institutions have their own limitations. They have to teach the entire syllabus in a limited period of time, just two hours a week.
4.6b. Teachers in government colleges

Teachers in government colleges were free from all the constraints which the teachers in private colleges faced. They were given six hours a week for each class. They have sufficient time not only to teach the prescribed syllabus but also to revise the additional exercises given at the end of every lesson.

4.7 Number of students

The size of the sample is 667, which has been collected from the colleges of three different regions of Andhra Pradesh, namely, Andhra, Rayalaseema and Telangana. This sample is a random collection which is analysed along the following categories.

- Region-wise
- Medium-wise
- Year-wise
- Gender-wise
- Error-wise and
- Task-wise

4.8 Conclusion

This chapter has given a brief description of the methodology adopted for the study, teachers’ and students questionnaires, places that have been visited for data collection and the difficulties faced in the collection of data.