8.1. Introduction

Among the four skills of language teaching, "writing" is the last skill to be developed (L, S, R, W) it is rather strange, that there are no tests to test the three basic skills at the school final examination stage, and all tests and questions only judge the pupils' achievement through writing. If "listening" skill is to be tested, it is through a brief interview, or viva voce test. If "speaking" skill is to be evaluated, it is again through a short question answer, or again an interview test. If we judge the "reading" skill, then it is through the comprehension of question papers, and their written answers in script. Thus it is a test of writing and writing correctly.

After listening, speaking, and reading comes writing. It is writing, which makes a child gain, full and final control and command, over a language. The source of all knowledge is found out from the written form of a language. It is therefore of the maximum importance and is to be taught and learnt, properly.

8.2. Findings

This research entitled, "A Linguistic Assessment of the Writing skill of Graduate Students in English Composition", has been carried out on the students of Bharathiar University and the following are
some of the findings regarding the performance of the undergraduate students while writing the English compositions. The responses of the informants have been analysed carefully at various levels, in connection with the structures of the English language, at all levels (morphology, lexical, syntax, discourse and vocabulary). Some hypotheses have been worked out to prove that the socio-economic background has some influence on the performance level of the informants while handling the writing skill.

8.2.1. Discourse Structure

The analysis has found out that the discourse structures of the English compositions are hardly followed by the students. The language use is not brief and formal in the compositions. Spoken discourse is imitated a lot than the written discourse. Grammatical rules are not applied properly. The responses thus reflect the formulae that a written language is basically a representation of a spoken language.

8.2.2. Socio-Economic Influence

The socio-economic background of the learners has influenced the learning process of the target language. It has to be noted that the target language, that is, English learnt well and used only by the English medium students has been disproved scientifically with the empherical data in this study. The students hailing from rural residential areas, uneducated parents with very low economic status and who have been educated in ordinary government schools, with
out any technological exposure too have performed well when compared to the students who come under highly economical, well educated professionally settled parents, who enjoy the pleasure of the modern and technical exposure at their door steps.

In spite of all the above advantages and the positive circumstances provided by the private management schools with its teaching standard which is up to the mark, the students are not motivated in learning the target language where as the students studying in the Government schools work hard in spite of the disadvantages they face in the State managed Government schools.

It has been found that teaching standards and methods are much below the average in the State run schools. The students learn the target language out of their own interest and master it and manage the situation well due their high motivation. So it is not the medium of study that makes the students to perform well, but the keen interest and motivation shown by the students and the parents which contributes for better learning of the English language.

8.2.3. Frequency Count of Vocabulary Items

While testing the vocabulary power of the students, it has been found out that the students have used a lot of function words and less number of content words. The repetition of function words reaches more than 45. The function words like prepositions, articles, verb agreement and number agreement forms are quite frequent, where as the content words are less frequent with single entry and hardly a few
have double entry. Moreover, while writing the content words, the students have committed a lot of spelling mistakes.

8.2.4. Lexical Choice

The chapter on lexical choice discusses the uses of lexical items by the informants. It has been found out that some words are used out of context from semantic point of view. The informants have used some lexical items triggered by the influence of their L1. The direct use of the structure of the mother tongue in the English syntactic structures has resulted in deviation while writing the given English compositions.

The informants have also used the Internet language in writing their compositions. The use of the machine language has brought a change in the writing skill without any correct grammatical forms, which leads to a different style, new from the normal structure of the target language. They have also used the wrong grammatical forms (wrong use of preposition, verb, etc). Proper care should be given to teach the words with their correct meanings and their usage in the right contexts. The students should be trained by introducing the new forms like word games etc., to improve the word power in the target language.

8.2.5. Morphology

The morphophonemic changes, and the problems experienced by the informants have been dealt with in this chapter. The
informants have wrongly added the prefixes and suffixes for the words while writing the compositions. Incorrect marking of the singular and plural, number agreement, possessive markers, etc., are some of the areas that are problematic to the graduate students. Misinterpretation of morphological changes leads to lot of erroneous construction.

8.2.6. Syntax

The informants' knowledge level in the syntax of the second language (English) has been tested in this chapter. The students while constructing sentences encountered a number of problems. The informants have written lengthy sentences bothering little about the structure and punctuation marks. Grammatical forms (noun, verb, articles etc.,) are not properly used. The sentence structure used is also improper. They were unable to use the correct co-ordinating sentences while writing the complex sentences. They have committed error in the use of tense form. Normally the tendency is to mix up the present tense form in a past tense sentence, future tense form in present tense sentence and so on.

8.3. Conclusion

On a close look at the difficulty of the students experienced while writing the English compositions, it has been identified that they are at ease while writing compositions such as letter writing, dialogue, comprehension, where as they feel it difficult to write invitation, and hints development (Autobiography). This may be because the later
two are relatively new genres of compositions from the students' point of view.

The informants, while writing four to five sentences commit minimum grammatical errors. But while writing the long composition in narration (hints development (Autobiography)), it is very hard for them to elaborate the given ideas into an essay. Writing more than fifty lines makes them feel odd and tired about it whereas, they manage with the letter writing, job application etc., this is because they replace the given statement from the questions by adding one or two sentences it. But the exercises like developing hints, dialogue writing cannot be developed from the words in the questions on the contrary they require creative skill to enrich their linguistic skill. So, they strive a lot to manage with whatever quantum of knowledge they posses in English. The informants have managed to elaborate it with minimum and maximum errors in all aspects (discourse, morphology, lexical, syntax, etc) while some have either replaced the hints as such by dropping the hyphens or they have chosen to omit the composition itself without attending it.

It has to be stated that the performance level of the students in English language do not have full but only partial correlation with social and other parameters such as socio-economic status, medium of instruction, choice of school, etc., chosen for this study. Students belonging to all categories and backgrounds do commit errors in the
target language, which may be due to the improper learning from the beginning or due to the influence L1 or due to inherent nature of L2.

Teachers alone cannot be blamed for the present situation in L2 learning; the students should also share the responsibility equally. Concentrating on each and every individual in the classroom is not practically possible, especially in the Indian situation. The students, teachers and parents all should take concrete efforts to improve this situation. It has to be agreed that even the most intelligent and conscientious students do make errors, even while learning under the best possible conditions. Such errors may be due to exceptional reasons.

Though the social and economical background plays a role in obtaining a better education for the learner; it is the interest and motivation of the learner, which is the deciding factor on the quality of the target language that is acquired.

The following are the shortcomings attested in the writing skill of the informants.

1. Letter writing, dialogues, stories, reports, comprehension etc., lack in creative and linguistic skills.

2. Mother tongue influence on the target language - structural errors.

3. Improper learning and inappropriate use of the target language rules - fear as hurdle.
4. Lack of variety in sentence patterns – incomplete sentences, writing as speaking.

5. Shortage of vocabulary leading to the repetition of function words and the improper placement of content words.

6. Repeated use of the words given in the questionnaire, and not answering in own words.

8.4. The following remedies are suggested for improving learning process of the students

1. Teachers should help the slow learners with tension-free techniques in teaching difficult areas.

2. Teachers should make their students' feel they are to approach and make their students learn the language with care by explaining the difficult points as many times as required.

3. Teachers should spend a lot of time in giving practice over the difficult part and make the students realize that they could win over it if they work hard.

4. Teachers should infuse self-confidence in the minds of the students.

5. Teachers teaching English may seek the help of the other subject teachers, to whom the pupils may feel free to discuss with and find out the problems they face and remedies they expect from the English teachers, while teaching the target language.
6. Teachers can encourage and motivate students to learn the language by presenting gifts for the students who perform well in the target language, which will lead to a healthy competition.

7. Since education and society are interrelated in more than one way, the teaching community has to be prepared and trained for new trends, by making minor changes here and there, in their techniques and methods.

8.5. Further Scope

Studies on the difficulties faced by the learners can be analysed in a different way. A group of students from all the categories (medium, board of study, socio-economic background etc.,) can be selected and they can be pre-tested and evaluated. They can again be trained for six months in any of the skills or all the four skills, and again they can be post-tested. A comparative approach can be employed to access the performance level of the students in the pre-training and post-training stages.