CHAPTER II

DISCOURSE STRUCTURE
2.1. Introduction

"The study of writing has always been considered as a part of applied linguistics. Even before the 1960s, when writing was considered as a mere representation of speech, it provided a way of monitoring students' language production and of providing linguistic material because the technology for recording sound was not widely available. For researchers, it has always provided a source of tangible and relatively stable data for analysis as well as a way of recording speech. However, in the early years of applied linguistics, writing was not considered to be one of the proper goals of language learning. Writing was used only to the extent that it assisted the learning of speech. It was assumed that anyone who had the knowledge of spelling and grammar would be able to write. In the latter half of the twentieth century, writing, or written discourse, and the teaching of writing began to receive significant attention as a legitimate area of inquiry within applied linguistics". (Schmitt, 2002)

2.2. The Teaching of Composition

Like grammar, composition is an integral part of teaching English. But, it is very painful that proper emphasis is not given to the teaching of
composition these days. For many teachers, composition lesson is a dark shadow. Therefore, they have developed a sense of dislike and a fear of undergoing the strenuous task of teaching it. As a result it is relegated to the background. Composition is an art of self-expression. Through this the learner expresses his thoughts, ideas, feelings and observations. He can express it both in the oral and written form. Thus, composition is both oral and written which is correlated with recognized standards of form. The role of the teacher here is to encourage the students to express their ideas in an orderly manner. As P. C. Wren (Dash 2004) observes, “Composition should begin with the powers of speech and should be oral long before it is written”. The teaching of composition should enable students to acquire efficiency to converse in English. It should help the students to express themselves clearly and in an organized manner.

The term “composition” should not be construed in a narrow meaning as it is sometimes done, when some people say that composition and essay writing or letter writing is synonymous. Broadly speaking composition is the act of putting an idea into speech or writing.

2.3. Types of Composition

Composition can be divided into two types viz., oral and written.

2.3.1. Oral Composition

Teaching language will therefore be effective, if the teacher starts his teaching with oral work. But in our country, written work is
emphasised throughout the school stage. Composition here is thought to be nothing, but written work. Oral composition is the natural way of learning.

2.3.1.1 Aims of Oral Composition

Oral composition in the early stage of education helps the students cultivate the habit of active listening to others. They can express the ideas in a clear and original way. They speak readily, clearly, fluently and continuously. This practice helps them to speak well.

Oral composition also helps the children acquire a set of serviceable vocabularies and correct pronunciation. They are acquainted with new ideas and experiences. Correctness of expression, logical and thoughtful presentation of the subject matter, a grasp of the idiomatic spoken language etc., should be the desirable goal of teaching composition. Students are trained to express their ideas with courage and without fear.

2.3.2. Written Composition

Teaching of English should not only aim at enabling the learner to speak fluently, but also to write correctly. It is through written composition that a teacher can enable a student to write what he understands, feels and wishes. The students get an opportunity to cultivate a habit of clear and, logical presentation of facts. It gives further practice in the use of language. It has many social values also. The
student develops an attitude of collecting relevant material, logical thinking, application and methodical presentation. When a student acquires efficiency in oral expression through adequate practice, he should start practising written composition. The following are the types of written compositions.

1. Paragraph writing
2. Story writing
3. Reproduction of a story poem
4. Letter writing
5. Comprehension
6. Precis writing
7. Expansion of passages
8. Essay writing
9. Autobiographies
10. Dialogue writing
11. Appreciation of poetry
12. Paraphrasing
13. Report writing
14. Job application
15. Invitation and announcements

From the above list, letter writing, developing hints (autobiography), comprehension passage, dialogue writing, job application and invitation are taken up for analysis in this study.
2.4. Letter Writing

Of all the forms of writing, letter writing is considered the most challenging as well as rewarding practice. Challenging, because, in every letter we write, we are on trial, for it is in that the whole personality and character are revealed, and rewarding, because nothing can give more satisfaction than the feeling of achievement born of successful communication without face-to-face interaction. The art of letter writing is, therefore, no mere ornamental accomplishment, but something that every educated person must learn and acquire for practical reasons. If fine arts are classified today, letter writing is bound to be included as one of the manifestations of such arts. Letters have become an integral part of everyday life in modern times.

As a result of many inventions, discoveries and development in the field of science and technology, the world has shrunk and people have come closer to one another than in the past. Yet, the value of communication through letters has not diminished. Business people have to be in close contact with one another, and, their transactions have to be recorded. For such purposes letters are important.

It must be reiterated that communication through letters should be in simple language. The writer should bear in mind that letters should not be written to exhibit knowledge, or literary skill or high imagination, on the other hand, should state lucidly what the writer has in mind and
what he actually wants to convey. If he does so, the response also will be equally clear. In other words, a letter should be a reflection of the writer's personality – his qualities.

2.4.1. Types of Letters

Letters may be broadly classified into personal (private) and business letters. The former may also be termed social letters. They include invitations, messages of congratulation or condolence, description of visits to important places, etc. A letter should be grammatical and precise in expression. The writer should state all that he wants to convey without making the letter either a list or catalogue or a cumbersome long essay. Modern days are so full of hurry and bustle that one may not find much leisure to read a long letter. Hence, a letter should be brief, clear and devoid of unnecessary expressions. The recipient should not be driven to a dictionary to understand the ideas of the writer.

Business letters have characteristics that are different from private letters. Time is precious, especially to a businessman. Hence, a business letter should be to the point, and vagueness or ambiguity should be avoided. It should be pertinent and complete in all details. Above all, the letter should reveal the writer as a person endowed with courteousness. Courtesy is the hallmark of a good business letter and letter writer.
2.4.2. The Features of Letters

Letters are messages and certain letter - features have been established by experience and custom as the most useful features learned and used by every letter-writer, for neglect of them is a sign of ignorance and carelessness.

All the letters has its own features; they are

1. From address (Sender's address)
2. Date
3. To address (Direction, name and address of the person(s) to whom the letter is written)
4. Salutation
5. Subject (not always necessary in intimate, personal letters) (Reference)
6. Body
7. Subscription
8. Signature
9. The envelope

2.5. Data for the Study

The data elicited was subjected to analyses. The data was divided into different batches depending upon the performance of the students in writing three different types of letters, namely, letter to a bookseller ordering some books for their personal reading, application for a
situation in an organization and a letter to a VIP inviting him for a function to be held in the college. The consolidated performance of the students in these three letters is analysed and presented.

The students pursuing first year under graduate courses were selected as the informants. From the performance it was found that there had been a vast range of difference with regard to the structures of the letters that were written. Rarely do we come across students who have produced letters in proper form. The letters written by the informants were processed keeping in mind the proper forms of the letters. The data thus elicited were subjected to quantitative and qualitative analysis. The following analysis presents details about the performance level of the 143 informants. The data are presented in three different tables, as follows.

**Table 1**

The table shows the number of informants who have written versus, those who have not written the various features of the letter.

**Table 2**

This table shows the number of informants who have omitted any one features of the letter.

**Table 3**

This table shows the number of informants who have omitted more than one features of the letter.
Table-2.1.
The Defaulters Errors in (features) Letter Writing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Features</th>
<th>Written</th>
<th>Not written</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. From</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Date</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. To</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Salutation</td>
<td>143</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Subject</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Body</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Complimentary close</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Signature</td>
<td>139</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Address on the envelope</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>143</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1 shows the quantitative data on how many have written / not written the features. Out of 143 informants, only one has not written the “senders address” while all the others have written it correctly, which means that they are aware of, if not the entire part of the letter, which informs the reader from where the letter has come.
Out of the total, 96 of them have “dated” the letter while 47 of them have not. Out of 143 only one informant has not written the “To address” which shows that all the others are aware of the third part of the letter.

A scrutiny of the letters written by all the informants of the study shows that “salutation” is properly written by all the informants, irrespective of the category to which they belong.

It has to be noted that out of 143 informants only 58 have written the “reference”, whereas 85 of them have not written it. Those informants, who have not written it, had not learnt the features of different types of letters properly. An analysis of the “body” of the letter shows that out of 143 informants only one informant has made an error by not writing any subject and he has straight away given the list of books he wanted from the shop. All the other informants have written the “body” of the letter.

Out of 143 informants 140 have written the “complementary close”, while 3 of them have not written it. The analysis on “signature” shows that only 4 of them have not signed their letters, whereas all the others have worked out correctly. It has to be noted that a majority of informants, that is, 81 have not written the “address on the envelope”, and the rest, that is, 62 have written it.
Table-2.2.

The Defaulters with Single Error in Letter Writing

<p>| | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>From</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Date</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>To</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Salutation</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Subject</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Body</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Complementary close</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Signature</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Address on the envelope</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table above shows the performance level of students in the task of letter writing. It is a fact that the same informants have written all the other features of letter writing correctly. It has to be observed that all the 143 informants have written the “salutation” in their letter writing.

The performance of the students is viewed in association with their school education (Tamil/English medium), board of study (State/Matriculation) and the socio-economic background such as their
generation (I/II), [I-generation-parents have completed only their schooling, II-generation -graduate parents] and their residential areas (Urban/Rural). All these factors are dealt with because; they do play a definite role in the type of education the students receive.

Only 1 informant has not written the “date” alone, all the other features have been used appropriately. Further probing into informants’ detail, the informant hails from the urban area and has been educated in the State Board English School. The informant belongs to the second generation graduation and both her parents have completed their graduation. In spite of all these influences and advantages the informant has committed such an error.
Out of 28 informants who have not written the "subject" of the letter, it is found that 16 are from Tamil medium schools and 12 are from English medium schools. Further it is seen that of the 12 English medium students 6 have completed their schooling in State Board schools and an equal strength have completed in the Matriculation schools.

Considering the family educational background it was found that only two of the informants' parents are graduates. The rest of the (26) informants' parents are non-graduates. It has to be noted that only 10 were from the rural area and the other 18 were from the urban background.

The following diagram shows the distribution of the defaulters into various sub groups. Out of 143 informants, 24 of them have not written the "address on the envelope".
From the above diagram, we could easily list out the secondary information about the defaulters. Out of 24 informants, 6 have completed their schooling in Tamil medium and 18 have completed their schooling in English medium. A further probe into the nature of the medium of instruction, only 7 out of 18 have completed their schooling in Matriculation schools, but 11 of them have completed their schooling in State English medium schools.

Regarding their socio-economic conditions, it is to be noted that only one hails from the rural area, all the others that is 23 informants hail from urban residential areas. While looking into their family educational background 15 of the students belong to the first generation and 9 belong to the second generation.

The major combination of error committed by the informants is not dating the letter, explaining the purpose of the letter (subject) and addressing the envelope.

The informants might have felt it as a repetition to write the receivers address again. In real life situation he is sure to have written the "address on the envelope", as without it the purpose of the letter will not be solved (as it will not reach the addressee). But here they might have not felt it an urgent necessity.
Table-2.3.

The Defaulters with Multiple Errors in Letter Writing

<p>| | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Date and Subject</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Date and Address on the envelope</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>To and Subject</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Subject and Address on the envelope</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>From and Address on the envelope</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Subject, Body and Address on the envelope</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Subject, Signature and Address on the envelope</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Date, Subject and Address on the envelope</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Date, Complementary close, Signature and Address on the envelope</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Date, Subject, Complementary close, Signature and Address on the envelope</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above table gives details about the defaulters with multiple errors in presenting their letters. This table shows the performance level of the informants, on the features of letter writing, which has been omitted by them. A brief discussion on the above table is presented in the ensuring pages.
1. **Date and Subject (12)**

Of the 143 informants, 12 informants have not written the "date" and "subject" alone, while all the other features have been placed in the correct position in their letters.

Out of 12 informants, except 4 from rural residential locations, remaining 8 are from urban areas. Only 4 belong to the second generation graduation sub-group. The remaining 8 are from first generation graduation sub-group. With regard to the medium of instruction in school education a majority of them (ten informants) have completed their schooling through Tamil Medium schools and only a very minimum, that is 2 have got their school education through English medium schools. Out of the 2 English medium informants one has been educated in a Matriculation school, and the other in a Government school through English medium. The error in producing incomplete
“subject” may be due to the reason that the informants’ might have thought that the same “subject” is dealt with in detail in the body of the letter and hence there is no need to have an elaborate description of it.

2. Date and Address on the Envelope (9)

![Diagram]

The diagram shows that nine informants have not written “date” and “address on the envelope”. Of the nine, three have completed their schooling through Tamil medium schools and 6 through English medium schools. Out of the six only one has completed schooling in State Board English medium, whereas all the other 5 of the informants have got educated in Matriculation schools.
With regard to the parents' educational level, parents of five of the informants have already set their feet into the colleges and have become graduates; whereas the parents of four of the informants are school dropouts. As far the residential location is concerned three hail from the rural areas and the remaining 6 are from urban areas.

These students do not realize the importance of "date" in the letter. They have overlooked this aspect in letter writing. They have also forgotten that "address on the envelope" only can fulfil the purpose of a letter. If the letter is not addressed properly, it will not reach the right person. It can also be said that this aspect is either not emphasized during the learning phase or not carried on by the informants while reproducing it wherever and when ever it is needed.

3. To Address and Subject (1)

"To address" and "subject" are missing in the letters written by one informant. It has to be observed that the informant is educated in a private management school and his parents are graduates hailing from an urban area. In spite of all these advantageous positions the informant has not written the "to address" and the "subject" features in his letter. The informant has not written it because he might have felt unnecessary or a reoccurrence, since he has to write the "address on the envelope" of the letter.
The informants who have not written the "subject" and "address on the envelope" alone are 20 in number. The informants' personal details are given in the above diagram, which shows that out of 20 only 4 informants hail from the rural areas and all the other 16 hail from the urban residential locations. Only 7 belong to the first generation, the rest (13) belong to the second generation. Tamil medium students are only 7 in number whereas 13 have completed their school education in English medium schools. Out of 13 informants, 7 have been educated in the Government English medium State Board schools and the remaining 6 are from Matriculation schools.
5. From Address and Address on the Envelope (1)

An informant has omitted "From address" and the "address on the envelope" and has written all the other forms of the letter writing correctly. Probing into the educational background it was found that the informant has completed schooling in Matriculation school. But the parents are not graduates. So the informant belongs to the first generation of educated persons. The parents though themselves non-graduates made their son get educated in a Matriculation school, spending a lot of money. In spite of all these efforts, he has made error while writing the letter.

6. Subject, Body of the Letter, Address on the Envelope (1)

One informant has not written the "subject", "body" of the letter and "address on the envelope". All the other components have been properly written. The informant has completed his education in the Tamil medium school, though he hails from an urban area. But his parents had got only school education and thus the first member to be a graduate in the family. The error might have been due to improper learning or the informant might not have been taught properly. As heart is to the body, the form "body" is to the letter. But the candidate has not written it, and has only listed the books required from the bookseller, and did not bother to give information on whether the book should be sent through V.P.P or some other mode. From the analysis it is found
that this informant is very poor in coping up with the target language and has to be trained properly.

7. Subject, Signature and Address on the Envelope (1)

The informant has not written the "subject", "address on the envelope", in addition to these he has not signed the letter. He has written all the other components of the letter. The informant has made these errors due to many reasons. It may be due to the poor quality of education that he received in Government-run schools.

8. Date, Subject and Address on the Envelope (22)

The above diagram shows that 22 informants have not written the "date", "subject" and "address on the envelope" in their letter. On a scrutiny of their background, it is found that only 5 hail from rural residential areas and the rest 17 come from urban areas. Only 3 of the
parents are graduates the other 19 are non-graduates. None of the
defaulters has completed education in Matriculation schools. All the
informants (except the 6 who had their schooling in State Board English
medium) belong to the Tamil medium schools.

9. Date, Complementary Close, Signature and Address on
the Envelope (2)

The informants who have not written the above said components
belong to the same category. Both of them are from Tamil medium
schools, hailing from urban areas. Their parents are non-graduates and
their children got education in Government schools. These informants
have written only “from” and “to address”, “subject” and “body of the
letter”. The rest of the items were omitted and thus they have left the
letter incomplete.

10. Date, Subject, Complementary Close, Signature and
Address on the Envelope (1)

One informant has not written the 5 components and has written
only the “from” and “to address”, “body” and “salutation”. The informant
was educated in the rural area Tamil medium school and is the first
graduate in the family. So it could be said that the informant is very poor
in drafting a letter.
To sum up the findings on the performance of the students in letter writing twenty informants have written all the components correctly with some grammatical mistakes here and there. But the main factors that control performance of the informants in letter writing are the area of the residential location of the students (urban / rural), school education medium (Tamil / English) and board of study (Matriculation / State) and the generation (I / II).

In the following section an analysis of the informants' performance in writing the compositions like “Hints development (Autobiography)”, “Dialogue writing”, “Job application”, “Invitation” and “Comprehension writing” has been reported. The analysis not only explores data, but also tries to find out the reasons for the occurrence of such errors. First, the performance of informants in writing the composition “Hints development (Autobiography)” has been taken up for analysis.

2.6. Hints Development (Autobiography)

A biography is the history of the life of a person written by someone else. An autobiography is the history of the life of a person written by him. In writing an autobiography the use of imagination plays an important role. The writer should pretend himself to be another person, an animal, or an inanimate object, and invent an autobiography of him or it. The descriptions should be only in the first person. The story must
be made as interesting as possible and told in simple language, such as in every-day talk.

The students were asked to write the hints development (Autobiography) of a “river”. In order to reduce the burden, hints about the river were given. The framework shows the skeleton outline, some of the main facts and even a brief story in short is given to them. The students' work was made lesser, because they have to fill all the details, relevant to the story and thus make up a readable story. The texts were analysed and statistically probed to explore how many have attended and not attended the question, have written the autobiography in first person. All these details are presented in the table 4.

Table 2.4.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No. of informants</th>
<th>No. of informants attended</th>
<th>Not attended</th>
<th>Written in first person</th>
<th>Not written in first person</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>143</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Out of 135 only 63 of the informants have written the story in first person. The maximum ranking, 72 have not used the first person in their descriptions, so it has been treated as an error. Of the 143 informants chosen for this study eight have not attended this composition.
The following diagram shows the information on the factors that affect the students’ performance in composing autobiographies.

Out of 143 informants, 72 of them have not used first person singular narrative style in the Hints development (Autobiography). It is found that 43 of the informants have completed their school education in Tamil medium and 29 in English medium schools. Among them 14 studied through State Board English medium schools and the rest 15 through Matriculation schools. As for the residential area is concerned, 54 of them hail from urban and only 18 of them hail from rural areas. The parents of only 15 informants are graduates, whereas the parents of 57 informants have had only school education. The reasons for Tamil medium students not using first person narrative style are obscure. Chances are that they have not been introduced to such styles.
Eight of the informants have not attended the question at all. They are quantitatively and qualitatively analysed below.

Out of 143 informants, 63 representing a cross section of all the groups selected for the study have written the Hints development (Autobiography) in first person. Twenty five per cent of them have replaced the given hints, without showing any sign of creativity. From the analysis it becomes clear that more training should be imparted to our students in writing these types of compositions, which will enhance their imaginative power.

2.7. Dialogue Writing

A dialogue literally means, “Talk between two people”. Dialogue writing is a useful form of composition especially for the Indian students who aspire to gain command over spoken English. Writing a dialogue
successfully calls for a little dramatic power; it should be spontaneous or impromptu. The whole conversation should be brief, and the questions and replies as concise and pointed as possible.

The informants were asked to write a dialogue, imagining two friends engaging in a discussion about their hobbies. The data were analysed to see whether the following features were found in their dialogues.

(i) Colloquial way of talking English.
(ii) Conversation should be brief.
(iii) Questions and answers as concise and pointed as possible.
(iv) Normal and natural construction.

The statistical data thus follows in the following table.

**Table-2.5.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No. of informants</th>
<th>Not attended</th>
<th>Attended</th>
<th>Proper style</th>
<th>Improper style</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>143</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>139</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Comparing the performance level of informants in writing dialogues with that of the other components of compositions, it was found that the informants were good in writing dialogue. Except a few, most of the informants have performed well. Of the total 143, only one informant has made an error by not following the rules.
The informant who has not written the dialogue correctly has got education in a State Board school, but in English medium. The informant has written it in the discourse of a bio-data by first writing about his interests in hobby and devoting the next ten lines for writing only about his friend's hobby. The informant has not followed the rules of dialogue writing properly. All the other 139 informants have presented it in the correct style.

Three of the informants have not attended the composition. The following diagram presents a numerical sketch on how many have not attended the dialogue writing.

The informant, who has completed his schooling in Tamil medium, hails from rural residential area and the parents are non-graduates. So this informant might have faced difficulty, while writing the dialogue. But
the other two are urban, Government school educated informants whose parents are graduates.

The informants (140) who have written the dialogue have followed all the guidelines, which they have already learnt. From their answers we could find the proper adherence of rules; but the informants have made some mistakes by writing the sentences without any punctuation marks like question mark, exclamatory mark etc.

The use of lexical and morphological forms is also found to be incorrect. They have used the short form of the lexical items as they use in the “Internet” and “E-mail”. Lexical entries have been abbreviated like u' for your and ur for you are.

2.8. Job Application

In modern times, unemployment has almost become a universal problem. Newspapers carry plenty of advertisements inviting applications for a wide variety of jobs. So, applying for a job assumes a special significance. Writing an application needs perfection. All the essentials of a good letter should be supplemented by certain other factors. Interview method has become a common mode for the selection of candidates, but the interview itself is based generally on the information provided by the applicant in his/her application. Hence an application should be complete in all particulars.
So even without a slight error in the construction of sentences, or in the inclusion or exclusion of any relevant facts, the application should be neatly written. Some advertisements may indicate that the candidates should mention their age, salary expected and such other facts. These, then, should be definitely stated. Since much information about an applicant must be furnished, the application should necessarily be longer than an ordinary social letter.

2.8.1. Rules to be Followed in Writing Job Application

The applicant should follow the instruction given in the advertisement; supply all the information and papers requested. In most cases, an initial application will consist of two elements

1. A covering letter,
2. A CV (Curriculum vitae, sometimes called as resume)

The covering letter should be short and completely to the point. The information can afford to be more expansive in the CV. The CV is the place to strengthen the application by mentioning details that do not relate directly to the job, such as sporting achievement or charity work. But it should be carefully drafted.

It has to be remembered that the person processing the application at this stage knows nothing about the applicant except what he or she can see in the letter and CV.
The following analysis moves on to find out whether the informants have worked out all the above points while writing their job application to a firm, advertised in the "Hindu" for the post of secretary.

The table below gives information on how many out of 143 have written the covering letter.

**Table-2.6.**

**Performance of the Students in Writing the Job Application (Covering Letter)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No. of informants</th>
<th>No. of informants attended the composition</th>
<th>Not attended the composition</th>
<th>Written the covering letter</th>
<th>Not written the covering letter</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>143</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Out of 143 informants 8 of them have not attended the composition. 118 have written the covering letter and the curriculum vitae, but 17 of the informants have written only the CV without the introductory letter (covering letter).

The forthcoming diagram displays the background information about the 17 informants.
Only 4 of the informants have completed their school education in English medium, the rest (13) have completed in Tamil medium schools. An equal ratio of 2:2 is found in both State board English medium and the private management schools. While looking on to their residential area, 11 hail from the urban areas and only 6 hail from the rural areas. Regarding the informants generation, 14 of them belong to the first generation and only 3 belong to the second generation. If a person applies for a job, his application is the first contact with the prospective employer. It is an opportunity to create the right impression.

The students who have not written the covering letter might have felt that the CV itself contains all the information that an employer is likely to seek, but the rule is that a job application should have a covering letter, introducing the candidate in the CV.
The statistical data in the following table gives information about the practice of enclosing covering letter for the job application.

Table-2.7.

Performance of the Students in Writing the Job Application (Curriculum Vitae)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No. of informants</th>
<th>Not attended the composition</th>
<th>Attended the composition</th>
<th>Written the CV</th>
<th>Not written the CV</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>143</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The informants (20) who have not written the curriculum vitae belong to various socio-economic groups. They are illustrated in the following diagram.

Out of 20, only 7 of the informants belong to the second generation; all the other informants come under the first generation. In connection with the informants’ school education, 8 of them have had
Tamil medium education and an equal number in State Board English medium schools and only 4 of them have completed their schooling in the private management schools. Regarding the residential area of the informants, 14 hail from urban and only 6 hail from the rural areas.

The informants, who have not attached the CV, found it difficult to understand the meaning of the word “curriculum vitae”, probably because they hail from the Tamil medium schools. The table below gives information about the informants who have not attempted this exercise.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total (8)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Generation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First (8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second (0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tamil (4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English (4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residential Area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban (4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural (4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State Board (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matriculation (1)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The informants who have not attended the job application hail equally from both urban and rural residential areas. Though the parents are non-graduates, 4 of them have offered their children education in English medium schools (3 – State Board; 1 – Matriculation). Whereas, the rest 4 have completed their schooling in Tamil medium schools.
The informants, who have attached the CV, have clearly divided it into different sections like name, age, address for communication, religion, name of the schools and colleges they studied. They have also mentioned the details on the educational qualification, extra-curricular activities, and additional qualifications like certificate courses, games and their hobbies on various interests. The only thing the informants have not mentioned in their curriculum vitae is the “Reference”.

Every one needs a reference at the time of applying for a job. The persons of solid social standing – principal / headmistress, doctors, managers in reputable companies, or from any of the equal ranks can be referred to while applying. Potential employers will be more impressed if information about any such valuable references is given.

2.9. Invitation

Not often do we have the opportunity to meet our friends and relatives in person. Under such circumstances, letters offer us the best means of communication with them. Social letters include invitations to various functions, messages of congratulations or condolence, letters enclosed with gifts etc. These letters may be formal or informal.

2.9.1. Formal Invitation

The following information should be included in all formal invitations.

1. The name/s of the host/s.

2. The name/s of the recipient/s.
3. The nature of the function and, usually the occasion for it.
4. The address where the function is to take place.
5. The date and time of the function, usually in that order.
6. The address for replies, if this differs from the address of the function.
7. Invitation should be written in third person (he, she, they (rather than), I, you, we).

2.9.2. Informal Invitations

For less formal occasions, an invitation by means of a short hand written note or telephone call is usually good enough.

2.9.2.1. Information Included in an Informal Invitation

Informal letters of invitation, use the first and second persons (I, we, and you) rather than the third person (he, she, and they).

1. These cards may have the senders name printed on them.
2. Informal invitations are also sent in a so-called correspondence card.

The students have been asked to draft a formal invitation to a V.I.P. They are supposed to write an introductory letter to the V.I.P. regarding the nature of the function, on which occasions the function is observed or celebrated. The second thing is to attach the programme schedule of the occasion: date, venue, time and all other list regarding the same.

The following table statistically describes how many out of 143 have attended the composition.
Table-2.8.

Performance of the Students in Writing the Invitation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No. of informants</th>
<th>Attended the composition</th>
<th>Not attended</th>
<th>Written the programme schedule</th>
<th>Not written programme schedule</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>143</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The statistical data clearly shows that the performance of the students is very bad in writing the invitation. 63 of the informants have not made any attempt to write the composition and 52 of the informants have not written the programme schedule. The following diagram gives information about the informants who have not attempted the composition. Fifty-two students have not written the programme schedule.

![Diagram of informants by generation, medium, and residential area]

The 52 informants, who have not written the programme schedule, belong to various categories. Forty-four from urban areas and the remaining eight are from rural residential areas. While looking into their school education, 24 of the informants have completed their education in Tamil medium schools. As for the English medium, each student from

57
State Board English medium schools and Matriculation schools has not attempted it. Only 14 of the informants' parents have completed their graduation all the others (38) have had only school education.

The following analysis describes the reasons of why the informants have omitted the composition? And it also gives information about the social and other background of the informants as well as their parents.

The informants who have omitted the composition belong to both Tamil and English medium schools, 31 from Tamil medium and 32 from English medium. Out of the 32, the maximum of 22 can be grouped under the State Board English medium schools, whereas only 10 have completed their schooling in Matriculation schools. It has to be noted that, 40 of them are from the urban and only 23 of them are from rural residential areas, and also their parents' educational qualification too
has to be noted. Only 20 of the informants' parents are graduates, the rest 43 had only completed their schooling.

2.10. Comprehension

On a more technical level, comprehension involves a wide range of skills and interests. As a truly multi-dimensional affair, it encompasses a variety of abilities with respect to vocabulary, grammatical and discourse features, inferential processes and contextual knowledge.

Prose discourse usually takes on four forms: narration, description, exposition and argumentation. Each form serves a distinct purpose. Narration tells a story by recounting an incident or event. Description ‘paints’ pictures in words of an object, a person, a place, a state or a process. Exposition seeks to inform, set forth, explain or clarify. Argumentation is concerned with matters involving differences of opinion audit seek to persuade for or against a certain point of view.

In general, comprehension means an exercise consisting of a passage upon which questions are set to test the student’s ability to understand the content of the given text and to infer information and meaning from it. The last part of the questionnaire was to test the I.Q., of the informants. A simple comprehension exercise was given on the details regarding Christmas festival, but the questions were asked on “Deepavali”. The students should use their presence of mind by answering it correctly. Some clues were also given for the questions.
The following table presents the performance level of the students while writing the comprehension.

**Table-2.9.**

Performance of the Students in Writing the Comprehension

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No. of informants</th>
<th>Attended the comprehension</th>
<th>Not attended</th>
<th>Written the comprehension correctly</th>
<th>Not written correctly</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>143</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Out of 143 informants, 10 of them did not make any attempt and 133 informants have made an attempt and out of 133 only 113 have written the correct answers, while 20 of the informants have given incorrect responses. The personal profile of the informants who have written the comprehension incorrectly is as follows,

```
Total (20)

Generation

First (18)
Second (2)

Medium

Tamil (9)
English (11)

Residential Area

Urban (18)
Rural (2)

State Board (8)
Matriculation (3)
```
Eight of the informants out of 20, have been educated in the State Board English medium schools, only 3 of the informants have got their education in Matriculation schools. Though 18 of the families hail from the urban residential areas and only 2 families reside in the rural areas, they have given their children an average education in the State Board Government schools. But it has to be noted that the parents from the rural residential area have educated their children in the Matriculation schools. This may be due to the awareness they get from the present society.

Some of the informants (10) did not attend the question. All the informants except one hail from urban residential area. And only 2 of the informants' parents are graduates while the remaining (8) have completed their higher secondary. Due to their low income 7 of the parents have given education to their children in Tamil medium schools.
and one in English medium State Board School. Two graduate parents have given their children a value-based education in Matriculation schools. From the analysis, it is found that the informants, who have written the incorrect responses have made some mistakes by writing long sentences, repeating the same as such in the passage; instead they should have read the given passage carefully two to three times.

2.11. Conclusion

The table below gives information about the performance of informants in different genres of composition.

Table – 2.10.

Overall Performance of the Students in Writing Compositions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S.No.</th>
<th>Compositions</th>
<th>Attended</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Letter writing</td>
<td>143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Hints development (Autobiography)</td>
<td>135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Dialogue writing</td>
<td>140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Job application</td>
<td>135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Invitation</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Comprehension</td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above table clearly shows the overall performance of the students. Among the various composition skills, “Letter writing” is very
familiar among the students. This is very clear from the above table. The reason that can be attributed to this trend is that, during their academics they have written letters for taking leave etc., and at time may have written letters ordering for books etc. This kind of composition has been in the curriculum right from the middle school stage till the higher secondary. There is no language examination question paper (L₁ + L₂) without letter writing. All these years by trial and error they might have learnt the components of letter writing. It is to be noted that all the 143 informants have attended letter writing. The next composition, “Dialogue writing” is attended by almost all the informants except a few (3) – “Hints development (Autobiography)”, “Job application”, “Comprehension”, were attended by about 135 informants. They have used their imagination to the fullest possible level but at times deviation is noticed.

In the “comprehension”, some students have reproduced from the passage itself, but some have added their own ideas to it. Some have deviated from the ideas given in the passage. “Invitation” is the most difficult composition exercise faced by most of the informants'. Students hailing from both English and Tamil medium have omitted this exercise. Drafting an invitation has occurred only rarely through out their academics. But invitation plays a very important role in the day-to-day life. The students are invited at many occasions through informal invitations like marriages, birthdays etc. Though they are familiar with the forms of the invitation they have not drafted an invitation even once
in the formal situation. This might have been the reason for nearly 63 students not attending this particular composition.

The myth that the second language learning depends upon the socio-economic background of the students is disproved with this scientific study. The analysis clearly shows that the students hailing from both Urban/Rural background, studied in Tamil/English medium, board of study State/Matriculation, had performed equally without any difference. So it has been evidently proved that mastering the target language not only depend upon the socio-economic background, but also the personal interest they show in learning the target language.

From the analyses it is found that the students, even after completing their twelve years of schooling find it difficult, either what to write or how to write. Some times they know exactly what they want to say but fail to put it down in writing and they distract from the context.

The students should learn compositions of these types in a systematic and careful way. It helps the students to master all the other skills in the target language. Students should be provided with opportunities to think about the situation provided. They should be guided to develop efficiency in organizing thoughts and ideas and marshalling them in an intelligible order and sequence. They should be taught to express their thoughts according to the accepted usage. A suitable lesson in composition enlarges the vocabulary of the students.
Just as words and phrases make up a sentence, a number of sentences put together constitute a paragraph, and several inter-related paragraph make an essay. Organisation for composition is the art of good construction. Ideally, a good essay like a good house is not only well structured but also aesthetically satisfying. It should say what it wants to, methodically, forcefully and convincingly.