CHAPTER FOUR

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4.0 Location of the Present Study

Aligarh is an educational town situated in the state of Uttar Pradesh, India. The historical, world renowned Aligarh Muslim University, founded by Sir Syed Ahmed Khan makes Aligarh a place of study with students from different places (within India and outside), backgrounds, religions, genders, and colors etc. get admission each year to study here. Being a central university, it is aimed at providing modern scientific education to all since its establishment. It is deeply rooted in traditions and values and is a dynamic example of cultural wealth, evolution, and adaptability. For educational purposes, people from distant and near towns often settle here. However, rapid growing population, large immigration, and increased awareness towards modern education led to the establishment of many more schools and educational institutions who serve to provide quality education to Aligarians. This makes Aligarh a hub of education.

4.1 The Sample

4.1(i) Students’ Sample

The present study is done on three secondary schools in Aligarh. These are:
i) AMU Girls High School, which comes under Aligarh Muslim University,
ii) Iqra Public School (IPS) and,
iii) Aligarh Public School (APS)

In both IPS and APS, which are private schools, girls and boys receive education together. All the three schools are English medium.

25 students from Class VIII and Class IX from the three schools were randomly selected for the study. The total number of students surveyed were 150.
4.1 (ii) Teachers’ Sample

In total there were nine teachers, three from each school, considered in this study. All the nine language teachers were teaching English to students of class VIII and class IX. They were well qualified and held degrees in bachelors or masters (B. Ed, M.Ed) or MA in English language. Besides, most of them were experienced teachers and had been serving their respective institutions since a long time.

4.2 Tools for Data Collection

Written essays, in class assignments, formal interactions, questionnaires, and field based diary were the prime sources of data collection. The teachers’ evaluation of students’ writing in Aligarh secondary schools was the prime research concern. The study was undertaken to look into the assessment pattern in class VIII and class IX in the three schools and to view the place of writing in the classroom. The corrected copies of the students were studied and their in-class and out of class writing and assessment were noted. Teachers were separately given a questionnaire and issues of writing were discussed.
4.3 Pilot Study
Before conducting a full-length study, a pilot survey was conducted in order to determine the mode of data collection. The survey was conducted on total thirty students in all the three schools (ten in each school- five in class VIII and five in class IX). Besides, the questionnaire was administered to three respondent teachers. This enabled the researcher to justify the validity of the questions included in the questionnaire, and also helped to further consolidate the representative sample and to refine the methodology for data collection. The students were given several topics (e.g. The Book I like Best, The Pleasures of Reading, Importance of Cleanliness, The Best Way of Spending Holiday, My Favorite Sports, Annual Day Function, and Pollution, etc) to write on and to choose from any one of them. After they finished writing, it was handed over to the respected English teachers along with a checklist to direct their evaluation. This enabled us to understand the validity of the topics, the level of students, and the appropriateness of the procedures for carrying out the research.

4.4 In class Assignments and Timed Impromptu essays
The process approach to writing advocates the idea of testing writing by making students write. Therefore, the students’ written samples in the form of in class assignments comprising in and out of class writing as class work and home work from the English note books as well as the direct evidence of their writing abilities and behaviors based on the time- impromptu essays (on the spot essays) were considered for the research.

4.5 Teachers’ Questionnaire
One of the most important tools used in the collection of sociolinguistics data is a questionnaire. Appropriate questions were selected and organized in proper manner. After the samples of the respondents were selected, the next step was to shape an adequate questionnaire. The questionnaire was distributed to nine English language
The questionnaire in the present study was framed very carefully. In total, there were twenty two (22) questions. Most of them were close-ended, while some were open-ended as well (Appendix III). The questions were framed to elicit valid and useful responses of the teachers. The questionnaire dealt with issues like the teachers’ view of students’ evaluation, the importance given to writing as a skill, improvement strategies applied by teachers in case errors persisted on students’ writing, their view of good writing etc. All the nine teachers filled up the questionnaire on time and most of them provided valuable insights indicating their interest in the research.

### 4.6 Teacher Interaction

Teacher interactions are highly variable and depend on the personality of the investigator and respondent. Besides collecting the data through the questionnaire, data based on informal interactions of teachers were also recorded. While interacting, different questions were put to them, to which they responded verbally and through writing. The teachers were asked about their experience in the field, and the place which writing occupied in the examination system, the approximate number of written assignment in an English language class, the qualities displayed by skilled and unskilled writers, the effect on writing as students are promoted to higher levels, measures taken by them to improve students’ writing, the professionalization of the field (workshops, conferences, symposium, writing projects etc.) and other questions.

### 4.7 Field diary based on general observations

Apart from teacher questionnaire, students writing samples and photocopied class note books, suggestion by teachers regarding the writing evaluation, effective teaching of writing skills, students’ performances were recorded in the field diary for the purpose of analysis.

### 4.8 Process of data collection

The survey consisted of two parts:
4.8. (i) Assignment 1

It consisted of assessment of class evaluation of students’ work as written in the notebooks. To analyze the assessment pattern of assignment 1, first four tasks from the students’ note books were selected. The tasks consisted of story based answers to the questions in the prescribed NCERT text books, essays, and diary writing. The teachers were asked to collect the note books of students who intended to participate in the study. The collected note books were photocopied and were returned to them the next day. However, it is important to mention that the students’ written examination sheets of English as a subject were not incorporated in the present study as school authorities did not permit to use the examination sheets for survey and analysis.

4.8. (ii) Assignment 2

For Assignment 2 students were allotted 45 minutes time to write a timed- impromptu essay on any one of the given topics. The topics were the same as in the pilot survey. No prior discussion was held on the topics nor was the use of dictionaries permitted. However, some students consulted the teachers and the researcher and clarified their doubts before writing. While the students were writing, the behaviors and observation were recorded in the field diary. As was observed, some students paused to think on the topic, and searched for appropriate words. At times, the teacher’s help was also elicited. Some students took time to decide on which topic to write. After the sample essays were submitted, the researcher also discussed with respondent students issues like whether they found the topics easy or not, why they chose a certain topic, and whether it was easy to compose in English or their mother tongue (Urdu or Hindi). The submitted essays were handed over to the respective English teachers for evaluations. The teachers were provided with a brief checklist of items and criteria on which to mark the students’ written text. All the teachers returned the marked essays within three days. The English
language teachers were also given the questionnaires to fill at the same time while students were busy in composing essays.

4.9 Process of data analysis

After collecting both the assignments, the next step was the analysis of the teachers’ evaluation of the students’ texts. The assessment of teachers’ evaluation was based on Jill Kerper Mora’s detailed checklist of Grammar in Writing titled with “Grammatical & Syntactic Competencies in L2 Writing: A Checklist for Designing Instruction” published in Pack and Henrichsen (1980) (Appendix I). The checklist was adapted by adding a number of items in the original check list. (Appendix II). This adapted checklist was used for the purpose of analysis of Assignment 1 and Assignment 2. The analysis of the assessment pattern in both the assignments led to the evolvement of 2 categories—Marked and Unmarked. Each sample in Assignment 1 and Assignment 2 was evaluated in the light of the adapted checklist based on whether the mistakes were marked or left unmarked by the teacher. If teachers missed to mark the errors in students’ work, such mistakes were put under unmarked category. Subsequently, a table was drawn for each class and the specific numbers of marked and unmarked items were inserted on it. After a brief period of time, the tables were filled and were ready for ANOVA analysis. The data and ANOVA for both the assignments was processed separately and the results were derived accordingly. The results obtained from ANOVA analysis were descriptively analyzed. The ANOVA test showed a list of significant and not significant items in both Assignment 1 and Assignment 2. However, it was only the significant items (p value .05 or less) that were analyzed. The ANOVA test facilitated to know the common significant differences between schools, class differences as well as differences in schools in both Assignment 1 and Assignment 2. All these were descriptively analyzed in the results. Accordingly, the teachers’ questionnaire was put under statistical analysis and the results were descriptively analyzed. The ANOVA analysis enabled to meet the objectives of the
research enabling comparisons among schools and classes. The data was carefully handled to arrive at reliable findings.