CHAPTER TWO

METHODOLOGY
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METHODOLOGY

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</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER TWO

METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, an overview of the research environment and the demographics is given. The main focus is the development of the data collection tool that is, the questionnaire, the procedures used in the survey and in the experiment, and the statistical techniques used in both studies for data analysis.

Research integrating both qualitative and quantitative perspectives is needed in order to obtain a more clear account of what is being studied. The method adopted by the investigator should be adequate enough to study all the intricacies involved in a research problem and also to provide valid generalization. In order to fulfill the objectives of the present research, the study was undertaken in two phases: the first one involved a survey and the second one, an experiment. They are discussed separately.

2.1 THE SURVEY

Survey method was selected to investigate the process of teaching and learning writing as it is considered the best in obtaining personal and social facts, beliefs, motivations and concerns (Kerlinger, 1986). The investigator felt that a survey was necessary before the experiment because she wanted to find out the expectations of students of writing instruction, their views about their writing skills and the teachers’ views on their students’ writing skills and certain issues concerning the teaching-learning process. This, the investigator thought, would help her identify where exactly the problem lay regarding difficulty in writing and how things could be
sorted out. Moreover, teachers' opinions and suggestions were considered to be valuable for the study as the investigator planned to adopt and adapt the various strategies suggested by them to practise students' writing skills.

2.2 TOOL CONSTRUCTION

Teachers and students are important stakeholders in the process of education. As part of the study these two aspects were taken into consideration and the following tools were constructed:

1) Teachers' perception of the writing skills of students of Part II English and an insight into writing instruction.

2) Students' expectations of writing instruction and perception of their writing skills.

3) Diagnostic test for students (Tool to assess the writing skills of students)

The investigator strove as far as possible to ensure that the construction of tools served the purpose of fulfilling the objectives of the study.
TABLE 2.1

Tools used for the research

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S. No.</th>
<th>Research Tools</th>
<th>Dimensions</th>
<th>Method of Investigation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Teachers' perception of the writing skills of students of Part II English and</td>
<td>Opinion about syllabus, methodology of writing instruction and students'</td>
<td>Survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>an insight into writing instruction</td>
<td>writing skills</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Students' expectations of writing instruction and perception of their writing</td>
<td>Expectations about syllabus, methodology of writing instruction, perception</td>
<td>Survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>skills</td>
<td>of writing skills</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Diagnostic test for students</td>
<td>Grammar, lexis, syntax, mechanics and rhetoric</td>
<td>Survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Pre-test (same as the one used as diagnostic test)</td>
<td>Grammar, lexis, syntax, mechanics and rhetoric</td>
<td>Experiment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Post-test</td>
<td>Grammar, lexis, syntax, mechanics and rhetoric</td>
<td>Experiment</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.3 PILOT STUDY FOR THE SURVEY

A pilot study was carried out before the main study to test out the data collection instruments. There were three aims for piloting the questionnaire. First, it was done to check if the instructions in the questionnaire were clear; next to check if the questions and response categories were clear, that is, whether there were ambiguities in the wording of the questions and the response categories which could result in problems of interpretation on the part of the respondents; thirdly to determine
the approximate duration of responding to the questionnaire. With all the feedback and input from the pilot study, the research instruments and analytical framework were refined for the main study. Some response categories were removed, added and compressed. In addition, the wording and format of the questions were improved. The development of the instruments, the questions and the analytical framework are elaborated later in this chapter.

The preliminary try out of the questionnaire for the survey was piloted on 30 students each, belonging to various disciplines from Bishop Caldwell College, Thoothukudi and Kamaraj College, Thoothukudi. The responses were tabulated and analyzed. Certain questions had to be deleted and modified in the questionnaire because majority of the students had failed to answer them either because they did not understand or did not know what to write. For instance, one question in the diagnostic test was a descriptive one, asking students to discuss the usage of mobile phone. Only 9% of the students had attempted to answer the question and even those who had answered seemed to have been bereft of ideas. So the investigator decided to provide hints for that question and did the same in the main study. Similarly, the questionnaire prepared for the teachers was piloted among seven teachers, two from Bishop Caldwell College and five from A.P.C. Mahalaxmi College for Women where the investigator works at present. Two questions which were considered irrelevant for the study were eliminated and the types of questions were changed in three other cases.

The pilot study helped the investigator to fine tune the final version of the questionnaire. It helped her identify ambiguous wordings and statements that the respondents thought very difficult to comprehend, and repetition of certain items. The final questionnaire was modified with clearer questions.
The following section discusses the questionnaires used in the survey, the respondents and their socio-educational setting.

2.4 QUESTIONNAIRE FOR TEACHERS

Teachers are influenced by what they know, their background knowledge and by their environment at work, the context they find themselves in, that usually dictates over the curriculum they must teach. Considering the crucial role of teachers in a second language pedagogy, a need was felt to investigate the beliefs and perceptions of language teachers of the challenges involved in the teaching-learning process. A teacher of English should be aware of the aims and objectives of teaching English so that proper methodology can be followed while teaching. When teachers are clear about what methods they follow to teach a particular skill, and how far their students can grasp what is being taught, it will make fulfilling of the aims and objectives much easier. Keeping this in mind, the investigator prepared similar tools for teachers and students. A tool comprising fifteen questions was prepared. The purpose was to get an in depth view of the teachers' methods of teaching writing and their Part II English students' writing skills. This, the investigator felt, would surely contribute to raise the awareness of the current needs of students. It is particularly important when considering pedagogical innovations of second language writing. It was hoped that the responses of the teachers would facilitate a better understanding of the students' views. Thus, the study aimed at finding out the challenges that the instructors faced in teaching writing as well as their thoughts on what can be done to improve writing instruction.
The first part of the questionnaire sought to get personal details of the teacher. The second part of the questionnaire for the teachers comprised questions of closed type which had as responses, Likert scale items and multiple-choice items. It was used to obtain the teachers' views which, it was hoped, would clarify some of the students' responses. Fifteen questions were of the closed type because it was felt that closed questions were deemed to facilitate the comparison of participants' responses (Neuman, 2003; Bryman, 2004). Along with the responses, another category was given wherein teachers could write options other than the ones listed. They were also requested, if they wished to, to give reasons for the responses they had chosen. Three reasons account for including this response category. First, in order to minimize any feelings of frustration that participants may have as a result of being unable to find a category that they feel applies to them, which may result in their omission of the concerned questions (Bryman, 2004; Neuman, 2003); next to give the participants a chance to offer responses that were not provided, since as Bryman (2004) has observed, there is a possibility that participants may provide interesting responses that are not included in the response categories; and finally, to minimize the possibility of participants being forced to choose response categories that they would not otherwise choose (Neuman, 2003).

The questionnaire for the teachers was entitled *TEACHERS' PERCEPTION OF THE WRITING SKILLS OF STUDENTS OF PART II ENGLISH AND AN INSIGHT INTO WRITING INSTRUCTION.* (Appendix IV). The questions were formulated within the following dimensions:

- Syllabus
- Methodology of writing instruction
- Perception of students' writing skills
Syllabus

A syllabus refers to a particular plan of a course of study. It is a vital tool for mediating the expectations between students and teachers. In order to find out how much the teachers felt the syllabus for Part II English prescribed by the university catered to the students' expectations and needs, the following questions were asked.

1. The syllabus prescribed by the University for I Degree Part II English course

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>SA</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>DA</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Reason for your choice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>prepares students for life</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>promotes creativity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>prepares students to face examinations</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>gives enough scope for improvement of writing skills</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>is interesting</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Any other comment: ____________________________________________________________
Methodology of teaching writing

The Board of Studies of Part II English of Manonmaniam Sundaranar University recommends communicative language methods centred on task based interactive and learner-oriented approach to achieve the objectives of the course. The method of teaching of every teacher differs from that of the other. Students have different expectations. The investigator set out to find the various methods used by teachers in different colleges to teach writing. So the following multiple-choice questions were asked. They were also requested to give reasons for their answers.

2. The medium of instruction you use often in Part II English classes is:

a) English
b) Tamil
c) Bilingual

Reason ____________________________

3. Which method do you use often while teaching writing?

a) lecture method (explanation is given)
b) product approach (a model is given and students are asked to imitate)
c) process approach (questions are asked, ideas are discussed and points developed)
d) audio-visual method (using audio-visual aids like tape-recorder, television, computer, etc.)

Any other method ____________________________

Reason ____________________________
4. While teaching writing, you give more attention to:

a) grammar  
b) word choice  
c) word order  
d) mechanics of writing

Any other area _________________________

Reason  _____________________________________________________________

5. How often do you give writing practice to students?

a) everyday  
b) 3 to 5 times a week  
c) twice a week  
d) once a week

Reason  _____________________________________________________________

6. How do you prepare students for the examination?

a) they are asked to prepare their own essays  
b) they are made to write essays in the class  
c) notes are given by the teacher  
d) they are made to learn essays from guides

Reason  _____________________________________________________________
7. How often do you encourage students to write on their own?

a) frequently
b) sometimes
c) rarely
d) never

Reason _____________________________________________________________

Teachers' perception of their students' writing skills

An awareness of the strength and the weakness of the student will help the teacher to modify his/her teaching style. The investigator asked the following questions to the teachers in order to find out what level they thought were the writing skills of their students on an average.

8. How do you think are the writing skills of your students on an average?

a) excellent
b) good
c) satisfactory
d) poor

Why do you think so?______________________________________________

9. Which area in writing do you think interests the students?

a) grammar
b) word choice
10. Which area in writing do you think students need to improve?

a) grammar
b) word choice
c) word order
d) mechanics

Any other ____________________________________________________________

Reason __________________________________________________________________

11. Please mention in a few lines in what ways the writing skills of students can be improved. Do mention any innovative method you have employed in the classroom to teach writing.

_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________

The last question alone was an open-ended one.
2.5 QUESTIONNAIRE FOR STUDENTS

The student is the focus of the education system and the primary beneficiary. Hence the investigator thought it relevant to get the views of the students along with the tool to assess their writing skills. The first tool consisted of two parts (Appendix I). The first part sought to obtain personal information regarding their medium of school education, the discipline to which they belonged to, along with their parents’ social, financial and educational background. The second part sought to gather in-depth information about their views on writing instruction and their own writing skills. The next tool was a diagnostic test (Appendix II).

The investigator prepared the tool, STUDENTS’ EXPECTATIONS OF WRITING INSTRUCTION AND THEIR PERCEPTION OF THEIR WRITING SKILLS, keeping in mind the following dimensions:

• Students’ expectations of the syllabus.
• Students’ expectations of writing instruction.
• Students’ perception of their writing skills.

Respondents were presented with a set of alternatives from which they had to choose an appropriate answer. The closed questions included Likert-scale items and multiple-choice items. However, since it was difficult to provide the respondents with all possible response categories, a category of ‘other’ was included in the questions. This gave the participants a chance to offer responses that were not provided.

The views of students regarding their Part II English syllabus, the methods of teaching writing by their teacher and their own level of writing skills are of paramount importance because teachers can modify their teaching methods according to the
expectations of students. So a similar tool as that of teachers was prepared for students too.

**Syllabus**

The investigator asked the following questions to find out the expectations of students regarding the syllabus prescribed for Part II English by the University.

1. The syllabus prescribed by the university for Part II English should:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>SA</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>DA</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Reason for your choice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>prepare you for life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>promote your creativity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>prepare you to face examinations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>give you enough scope for improvement of writing skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>should be interesting</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Methodology used by teachers to teach writing**

The following questions were included by the investigator to find out what methodology they expected their teachers to use while writing.
2. Which medium of instruction do you prefer in your Part II English classes?

a) English
b) Tamil
c) Bilingual

Reason _______________________________________________________________

3. Which method would you like your teacher to use while teaching?

a) lecture method (explanation is given)
b) product approach (a model is given and students are asked to imitate)
c) process approach (questions are asked, ideas are discussed and points developed)
d) audio-visual method (using audio-visual aids like tape-recorder, television, computer, etc)

Any other method ______________________

Reason _____________________________________________________________

4. Which area in writing do you think your teacher should give more attention to?

a) grammar
b) word choice
c) word order
d) mechanics

Any other __________________________

Reason _____________________________________________________________
5. How often would you like to have writing practice?

a) everyday
b) three to five times a week
c) twice a week
d) once a week

Reason _____________________________________________________________

6. How would you like to prepare for the exam?

a) preparing essays on your own
b) preparing essays in the class
c) using notes given by the teacher
d) using guides

Reason _____________________________________________________________

7. How often do you expect your teacher to encourage you to write on your own?

a) frequently
b) sometimes
c) rarely
d) never

Reason _____________________________________________________________

Perception of students of their writing skills

Only when students are aware of their own writing skills they will have the urge to improve it. So the investigator framed the following questions.
8. What level do you think is your writing skill?

a) excellent  
b) good  
c) satisfactory  
d) poor  
Reason

9. Which area in writing interests you?

a) grammar  
b) word choice  
c) word order  
d) mechanics  
Any other  
Reason

10. Which area in writing do you feel you have to improve?

a) grammar  
b) word choice  
c) word order  
d) mechanics  
Any other  
Reason
Along with the questionnaire, students were required to write a test which the investigator hoped would give an insight into the writing skills of the participants. A diagnostic test measures where a student is in terms of his/her knowledge and skills. A teacher uses a diagnostic test to assess his/her students’ strengths and weaknesses in the subject. So the students were given a diagnostic test to identify where they lagged behind with regard to writing skills.

Among the many basic components and skills necessary for good writing, the most important and fundamental ones are grammar, lexis, syntax, mechanics and rhetoric. Grammar and syntax deal with the order and structure of language, including accepted rules and guidelines for constructing sentences that convey ideas most effectively. Lexis deals with words and their meanings. Mechanics include use of spellings, punctuation and capitalization. Rhetoric or style is a person's unique writing, voice and tone, and is used to help express individuality and communicate the desired ideas and concepts to the reader in the most engaging and meaningful way possible. Style is the control of language that is appropriate to the purpose, audience, and context of the writing task. The writer’s style is evident through word choice and sentence fluency. Skillful use of precise, purposeful vocabulary enhances the effectiveness of the composition through the use of appropriate words, phrases and descriptions that engage the audience. Sentence fluency involves using a variety of sentence styles to establish effective relationships between and among ideas, causes, and/or statements appropriate to the task.

The tool for the diagnostic test was prepared by the investigator herself, as no standardized tests of this type at this level were available. To prepare the tool for the
test, the weightage charts were prepared giving due weightage to the dimensions fixed. The test had 41 questions in all. Forty questions were intended to assess the students' skill in items like tense, agreement, prepositions, articles, word choice, word order and mechanics. One was a descriptive type of question. Hints were provided and students were expected to develop the essay on their own.

A blueprint was prepared to identify the learning objectives and skills to test, and whether relative importance was given to each. The blueprint was to ensure that the desired coverage of topics for assessment was obtained. Table 2.2 presents the blueprint of the diagnostic test.
### TABLE 2.2

*Blue print of the diagnostic test*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S. No.</th>
<th>Dimensions</th>
<th>Grammar</th>
<th>Vocabulary</th>
<th>Syntax</th>
<th>Mechanics</th>
<th>Rhetoric</th>
<th>Total no. of items</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Compon ents</td>
<td>Mark &amp; No. of items</td>
<td>Mark &amp; No. of items</td>
<td>Mark &amp; No. of items</td>
<td>Mark &amp; No. of items</td>
<td>Mark &amp; No. of items</td>
<td>Mark &amp; No. of items</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Tense</td>
<td>1(4)</td>
<td>1-4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Agreement</td>
<td>1(4)</td>
<td>5-8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Prepositions</td>
<td>1(4)</td>
<td>9-12</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Articles</td>
<td>1(4)</td>
<td>13-16</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Word Choice</td>
<td>1(8)</td>
<td>17-24</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Word Order</td>
<td>1(8)</td>
<td>25-32</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Spellings</td>
<td>1(8)</td>
<td>33-40</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Punctuation and Capitalization</td>
<td>1(8)</td>
<td>33-40</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Hints Development</td>
<td></td>
<td>10(1) 41</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total marks</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2.6 RESEARCH SETTING AND PARTICIPANTS OF THE SURVEY

The first phase of the research was undertaken at eight colleges of arts and science affiliated to Manonmaniam Sundaranar University, Tirunelveli. There are many arts and science colleges in all and the scope of the study was restricted to eight colleges. Three southern districts were represented in the survey. As many as 800 students participated in the survey. The details of the samples are given below.

**TABLE 2.3**

*District-wise distribution of the samples*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>College</th>
<th>Place</th>
<th>Number of Samples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kanyakumari</td>
<td>S.T. Hindu College</td>
<td>Nagercoil</td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pioneer Kumarasamy College</td>
<td>Nagercoil</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Arignar Anna College</td>
<td>Aralvaimozhi</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tirunelveli</td>
<td>St. John’s College</td>
<td>Tirunelveli</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C.S.I. Jeyaraj Annabackiam College</td>
<td>Nallur</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thoothukudi</td>
<td>G.V.N. College</td>
<td>Kovilpatti</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pope’s College</td>
<td>Sawyerpuram</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>V.O.C. College</td>
<td>Thoothukudi</td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>800</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The students were boys and girls ranging in age from 17 to 20. They were all first degree students belonging to arts and science disciplines. The following are other details regarding the participants of the survey.

**TABLE 2.4**

*Students’ gender-wise distribution*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Number of students</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>319</td>
<td>39.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>481</td>
<td>60.13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TABLE 2.5**

*Students’ medium of instruction-wise distribution*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Medium</th>
<th>Number of students</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>7.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tamil</td>
<td>736</td>
<td>92.03</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
TABLE 2.6

*Students’ college-wise distribution*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Discipline</th>
<th>Number of students</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Science</td>
<td>213</td>
<td>35.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arts</td>
<td>389</td>
<td>64.62</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TABLE 2.7

*Parents’ educational qualification-wise distribution*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Educational Qualification</th>
<th>Father</th>
<th>Mother</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Percentage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illiterate</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>17.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schooling</td>
<td>602</td>
<td>75.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>6.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The tables show that majority of the students are from poor socio-economic, educational backgrounds. Very few are from English medium schools. Most of their parents have had minimum educational qualifications. Teacher participants were teachers of English whose teaching experience ranged from 2 to 30 years. The study aimed at obtaining their views on issues raised in the students' responses to the questionnaire administered to them. It was hoped that the responses of the teachers would facilitate a better understanding of the students' views. Teachers were expected to highlight the challenges they faced in teaching writing as well as give their ideas on what can be done to improve writing instruction.

### TABLE 2.8

*Parents' occupation-wise distribution*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Father</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Percentage</td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Percentage</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coolie</td>
<td>607</td>
<td>75.91</td>
<td>214</td>
<td>26.74</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>14.12</td>
<td>552</td>
<td>68.94</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>5.65</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>3.99</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>4.32</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.33</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2.7 DATA COLLECTION

The investigator went in person to each of the eight colleges selected for study, sought permission of the Head of the Institution as well of the various departments and administered the questionnaire to the students. First, the participants were told the purpose of the research. They were made to understand that it was not an examination they were facing and that they could feel at ease. The members of staff of the department of English of the selected colleges were requested to fill in the questionnaire provided to them. The researcher explained to them how their opinions and suggestions would prove to be a valuable tool for the study and requested them to cooperate. At the end of every question of the survey tool, space was provided allowing participants to express their views in areas that may not have been touched upon by the investigator. It was hoped that the information obtained from the comments would help deepen the explanations gathered from the data. It took roughly one hour each for the students and fifteen minutes for the teachers to complete the questionnaire. The filled-in tools were collected and the results were tabulated and analyzed.

2.8 EXPERIMENTAL STUDY

The second phase of the study was the experiment. An analysis of the data collected through the survey gave the investigator an idea about the problems students faced in general when it came to writing. It also gave the investigator an insight into the teachers' perspectives and different methods of teaching writing. So, based on the results and responses obtained, and culling out certain features from available literature, the investigator selected a few appropriate strategies and decided to
implement them upon students at her workplace. The following strategies were selected: Motivation, Substitution Drills, Diary Writing, Feedback, Reading and Vocabulary Enhancement.

2.8.1 RESEARCH SETTING AND PARTICIPANTS OF THE EXPERIMENT

The investigator’s workplace was chosen for the experiment for the sake of convenience. Forty students of I BA Tamil were selected for the study. They were split into two groups – 20 as the experimental group and 20 as the control group. The students were allotted the groups based on their achievement in English in earlier class tests as well as their willingness.

TABLE 2.9

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Educational Qualification</th>
<th>Father</th>
<th>Mother</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Control Group</td>
<td>Exp. Group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illiterate</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schooling</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate</td>
<td>_</td>
<td>_</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is obvious from table 2.10 that only a negligible percentage of students’ parents have high educational profiles.
### TABLE 2.10

*Parents’ occupation-wise distribution*

*(Experimental Study)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Father</th>
<th></th>
<th>Mother</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Control Group</td>
<td>Exp. Group</td>
<td>Control Group</td>
<td>Exp. Group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coolie</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government</td>
<td>_</td>
<td>_</td>
<td>_</td>
<td>_</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.11 shows that majority of the students’ parents are either coolies or unemployed. So it is clear that almost all students have a very poor socio-economic background.

#### 2.8.2 THE IMPLEMENTATION

The experimental study began at the beginning of September, 2011.

#### 2.8.2.1 The Pre-test

All the 40 students were given a pre-test. The questionnaire was the same as that of the diagnostic test which had been used for the survey. The test was intended to find out the proficiency level of the students.
2.8.2.2 Introduction of the Treatment

The students chosen for the study were briefed on the purpose of the research and the methodology. The investigator met all the students every day in the usual Part II English classes. The syllabus prescribed by the university was dealt with in the classes. The students in the control group did not receive any special instruction for writing skills except for what was normally provided in their classroom. The investigator met the students of the experimental group during the lunch break and in the evening after classes at least twice a week. The strategies as mentioned before were implemented in those sessions.

Considering the students average level of writing skills, it was necessary to take them back to sentence level and begin with introduction of how to write sentences with simple structures. The implementation of the selected strategies is discussed below.

Motivation

From the outset, the investigator made the students conscious that the kind of treatment they were to undergo was, though an experiment for research would be highly beneficial to them in the long run. A rapport was established to promote a positive kind of involvement. First, the students were motivated to improve their writing skills. None of the students had come from English medium schools. So there was an inherent anxiety in them whether they could cope up with the English classes. The investigator made them understand quoting from personal experience how persistent effort can help even struggling language learners to write well. Whenever some interest or improvement was shown on their part, they were encouraged to
perform better. Simple words of appreciation like 'Well-written', 'Good effort', 'Remarkable imagination', etc., served as incentives for the students. A reassuring environment was created wherein they were able to cooperate with the investigator's ideas. Furthermore, they were made to feel that writing was not a chore but an interesting activity. The unconditional positive regard shown helped them develop a positive attitude towards writing. They evinced an overt sense of liking and interest in the activities given.

Substitution Drills

By the term 'Substitution Drills', the investigator means drilling of sentence patterns through substitution tables. Students were given a substitution table everyday from H. George's *101 Substitution Tables* from which they had to frame as many sentences as possible. The substitution tables in the book are meant to give practice in forming the main sentence structures in the language. This collection of substitution tables demonstrates all the main features of English verb-form usage. The vocabulary is limited to 1800 frequently-used words. Each table gives a brief account of the verb-form, sets out the vocabulary and provides a specimen sentence. This book was found to be appropriate for the students because of its simple exercises beginning from the lowest level and increasing in difficulty. A couple of examples are given below.
These exercises made them familiar with various structures. Some students went wrong by framing improbable sentences like, ‘I have found our watch’, ‘They have found our watch’, etc. The investigator explained to them why such constructions though grammatically correct do not make sense.

Examples such as the following ones were given and students were asked to do similar exercises.

Example: 1. What are you doing now? (reading)
I am reading.

Example: 2. What are they doing now? (studying)
They are studying.

Exercise: 1. What’s she doing now? (singing)
Exercise: 2. What are they doing now? (waiting)

The repetitive feature of these sentence patterns familiarized students with various simple structures. They were able to make a large number of sentences by
interchanging the words in each column of the substitution tables given. It is true as Billows (1975) says that “only by the repetition of countless correct sentences can we learn to speak or write a language correctly” (p. 77). However, care was taken to see that the incredibly monotonous drilling did not become mechanical.

‘Students need to learn and practice the art of putting words together in well-formed sentences, paragraphs, and texts’ (Harmer P. 55). The investigator adapted the idea suggested by Harmer (2004), in which students followed a written model, as the following example shows. Students were given a few model sentences and were asked to write similar sentences based on the information given.

### Look at the following information about Carlos’ likes (✓) and dislikes (✗) and read the sentences which follow.

**Carlos**

- **Music**: hip hop (✓), classical music (✗)
- **Sport**: football (✓), tennis (✓)
- **Entertainment**: films (✓), clubs (✓)
- **Food**: spicy food (✓), raw fish (✗)

He likes hip hop but he doesn’t like classical music.

He likes football and tennis.

He likes watching films and going out to clubs.

He likes spicy food but he doesn’t like raw fish.

Now write similar sentences saying what music, sport, entertainment, and the food you like. Use **and** and **but**.
Some examples (Harmer, 2004) like the following were also given to encourage students to write a paragraph which is almost identical to the one mentioned before. This is like a substitution drill in which new vocabulary is used within a set pattern or patterns. Students read the following paragraph:

William Shakespeare is England’s most famous playwright. He was born in Stratford-on-Avon in 1564, but lived a lot of his life in London. He wrote 37 plays including *Hamlet*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Henry V*, and *Twelfth Night*. He died in Stratford-on-Avon in 1616.

After the investigator made sure that students had understood the information about Shakespeare, students were given the following table of information and asked to write a similar paragraph about Jane Austen:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name:</th>
<th>Jane Austen</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Occupation:</td>
<td>One of England’s most famous writers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date of birth:</td>
<td>1775</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Place of birth:</td>
<td>Steventon, Hampshire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lived:</td>
<td>Bath and Southampton(cities in the south of the UK)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Examples of work:</td>
<td>six novels, including <em>Emma</em> and <em>Mansfield Park</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Died:</td>
<td>1817, Winchester</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(p. 57)
Diary writing

As these exercises were being given regularly, students were also asked to maintain a notebook wherein they could record whatever they wanted to. They could write what happened at home, on their way to college, in the classes, any interesting incident and so on. They were encouraged to begin with simple sentences such as ‘I woke up at 6 a.m.’, ‘I brushed my teeth’ and the like. After two months of writing about their daily activities, students were encouraged to write on any other topic that interested them. They began with simple topics like ‘My pet’, ‘My first day experience in college’, ‘A memorable day’, etc. Towards the end of the period of study, they were encouraged to write on topics like ‘Education in India’, ‘Role of youth in today’s world’. They were assured that they did not have to worry about committing errors. What they had to concentrate on was first flow of ideas. Writing prompts given by the investigator were tremendously useful, great triggers for a writing task. Here are some examples of writing prompts given to students:

- Who is your favorite actor and why?
- What are the three items you’d take to a deserted island and why?
- Write about one of your favorite movies and why you liked it so much.
- What is the best gift you have ever got?

Students showed great enthusiasm while writing on these topics.

Feedback

How teachers intervene in writing instruction, and how L2 writers react to the feedback influences the composing process. The investigator read the students’ diary
entries every week. She focused on idea development, clarity, and coherence before identification of errors and grammar correction. Certain errors in writing had to be pointed out in the beginning itself so that they do not become ingrained or fossilized in their writings. Only those errors which impeded meaning were pointed out first. The students were given the correct usage and better presentation of ideas. The students were also asked to read one another's notebooks, so that they could become familiar with different styles of writing and also avoid mistakes. The purpose of the feedback was to make sure that students learnt from their own mistakes. The investigator did not fail to appreciate the students with words of encouragement like 'You have done a good job!', 'I appreciate the efforts you have taken', 'Good effort! You can do better' and so on. Monitoring student progress is important for two reasons: it allows teachers to measure students' writing on an on-going basis to determine how and what to teach, and it allows administrators to measure the effectiveness of a holistic natural approach to teaching writing. This idea, adapted from (Hamayan p.8), that on-going assessment is a crucial element of good teaching, regardless of the approach taken, prompted the investigator to read the students' entries in their diaries and give comments regularly.

Reading

Students were encouraged to develop the habit of reading. The investigator circulated her personal copies of simple story books. Students of the experimental group were asked to read the stories and write the summary of the stories they had read. Reading stories made them become familiar with different sentence structures and new words. Most of the story books circulated were writings by Indian authors. Reading a variety of literature provided models that illustrate the characteristics of good writing. This included how authors use words to evoke specific images and
feelings, manipulate sentences to speed or slow down the flow of text, organize ideas, set and change the mood of text, or use illustrations to reinforce and sharpen a reader's understanding.

Vocabulary enhancement

No explicit instruction was given for enhancement of vocabulary. Students were asked to make note of the new words they came across while reading, find the meanings and learn their usage. They were asked to frame sentences using the words they had learnt and use them while writing. Furthermore, they were asked to find out derivatives of the words they came across. This process, it was hoped, would help them enhance their vocabulary.

Towards the end of the study, the students in the experimental condition showed perceptible signs of improvement not only in their performances but also in their attitude towards writing in English. Not much of instruction was given. The learning experience was fortuitous. It was a combination of strategies namely Motivation, Substitution Drills, Diary Writing, Feedback, Reading, and Vocabulary Enhancement which indirectly persuaded students in the experimental condition into autonomy in learning. The duration of the study was for eight months (September 2010 to April 2011).

2.8.2.3 The Post-test

At the end of the study a post-test was given to all the students. The investigator followed the same pattern of questions as followed in the pre-test. The answers were evaluated and marks were tabulated. The pre-test and post-test marks of
all the students were compared using the statistical techniques given below and the results were analyzed.

2.9 SCORING RUBRIC

A scoring rubric was framed for scoring the scripts of the diagnostic test. For the objective type questions, one mark was given for the correct answer and no mark for the wrong answer. The descriptive answer was valued objectively. Cushing Weigle (2002) says that 'different aspects of writing ability develop at different rates for different writers: some writers have excellent writing skills in terms of content and organization but may have much lower grammatical control, while others may have an excellent grasp of sentence structure but may not know how to organize their writing in a logical way' (p. 114). One of the best known and most widely used analytic scales in ESL was created by Jacobs et al. (1981). In the Jacobs et al. scale, scripts are rated on five aspects of writing: content, organization, vocabulary, language use, and mechanics. The five aspects are differentially weighed to emphasize first content (30 points) and next language use (25 points), with organization and vocabulary weighted equally (20 points) and mechanics receiving very little emphasis (5 points). Following the ESL Composition Profile of Jacobs et al. (1981), ratings were assigned for five criteria: content, organization, vocabulary, language use, and mechanics. The descriptive answer was evaluated using this scale. Based on the marks scored overall, students were rated as 'excellent', 'good', 'satisfactory' and 'poor'.
2.10 STATISTICAL TECHNIQUES USED FOR ANALYSIS OF DATA

For the survey, the investigator used percentage analysis. The formula used to calculate the percentage was as follows:

\[
\text{Percentage} = \frac{\text{No of subjects}}{\text{Total No of subjects}} \times 100
\]

For the experimental study, the mean scores of the control group (M1) and those of the experimental group (M2) were calculated.

Mean score of students was calculated by using the formula,

\[
\overline{X} = \frac{\sum X}{N}
\]

Where,

\[
\overline{X} = \text{Arithmetic Mean}
\]

\[
\sum X = \text{Sum of the individuals' scores}
\]

\[
N = \text{Number of individuals of the sample}
\]

The percentage of gain score was also calculated to find the difference in the level of achievement of both groups.

2.11 SUMMATION

In this chapter, the investigator has given a detailed account of the preparation of the tools for the survey, the procedure of data collection, the research settings and participants of the survey and of the experiment, and a sketch of the implementation of strategies for the experimental study. She has also discussed the scoring rubric and the statistical techniques used for the analysis of data. The tabulation of the data obtained has been presented in the following chapter.