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# **AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE ENGLISH COMPOSITION WORK OF SECONDARY SCHOOL CHILDREN**

**By**  
**N. C. SONI,**  
**M.A., M.Ed., Dip. A. Ling.**



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**DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND PSYCHOLOGY**  
**Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda**  
**BARODA, 1965**

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**INDIAN INSTITUTE OF  
ADVANCED STUDY  
SIMLA**

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## FOREWORD

The present monograph embodies the results of an important and useful investigation carried out by Mr. N. C. Soni into the English composition work of secondary school children. It is a sad commentary on our educational system that composition work has become a bugbear to the teachers some of whom are frightened into leaving the teaching profession to avoid the dull and prosaic work of correcting heaps of notebooks every week.

Recent researches have established that their faulty approach to composition is responsible for this tragic state of affairs in schools. Composition work if rightly planned and executed can be a pleasurable and rewarding experience. It should no longer degenerate into dull and mechanical labour if its objectives and methods are properly understood by headmasters and teachers.

After a careful analysis of the common mistakes committed by pupils, Mr. Soni has been able to pinpoint the weakest spots which demand close attention from teachers. The study will give an insight to the teachers into the causes of mistakes and show how they can be guarded against. It is hoped that the study will serve the purpose for which it was undertaken and contribute to the solution of a problem facing teachers all over the country.

Baroda,  
28-3-'65

M. S. PATEL  
Dean  
Faculty of Education & Psychology



# I

## INTRODUCTION

For about a hundred years until recently, English occupied a position of paramount importance in the entire educational system of our country, right from the lower middle to the university stage. The students had the advantage of hearing English spoken by different persons, and of speaking, reading and writing it themselves most of the time. English was the language of the government, public administration, the legislature and law courts. It was the medium of communication between educated men and between the various language areas. All this meant that a knowledge of and command over English was a practical necessity to any ambitious Indian youth. The pupils were learning English by the natural method and the standard of their achievement was high.

But gradually, as English ceased to be the medium of teaching at one stage after another, deterioration in standards in schools and colleges set in. Before the falling standard could be stabilized at some stage, there came the dawn of freedom. The entire educational set-up of the country up to the secondary stage was reformed. There was a drastic reduction in the total time given to the teaching of English. Many a man demanded that English should quit India with the English. But the great public interest still existed in the teaching of English.

It is evident, however, that there has been a progressive fall in the standard of the pupil's achievement. The changes effected in secondary education were sudden and there was no plan to check the fall in the standard of English. Today, a correct English sentence from a high school student is an exception rather than a rule. And now teachers, parents, employers, scientists, educationists and all, to the exception of the politicians, feel alarmed



and complain about this sad state of affairs. They feel the pangs of the great possession, fast sleeping out of our hands. It is a pity that in the absence of a well-defined policy and definite guidance from the centre, the State Governments follow divergent policies and some of these have not been conducive to the proper study of English.

### **A Broad Analysis of the Actual Conditions :**

English teaching in the lower classes is generally in the hands of teachers, who have had the benefit neither of university education nor of any special training for the job. Besides, there is a great misunderstanding among the teachers about the language ability to be attained by the pupils. Many a teacher do not have a clear concept of the structural approach. There is an acute shortage of teaching aids and little or no provision for the in-service teachers to acquire the skill in the new technique of teaching. There is a lack of proper atmosphere for the teaching of English and there are no special rooms for the teaching of English, where a suitable atmosphere can be created. There exists today a bitter ideological struggle between Hindi or English. The style and the standard of the question papers at the public examinations at the end of the secondary stage are nearly the same as they were ten years ago. Hence the practice of mugging up answers to a few stock questions has become popular. To the exception of a few routine exercises in translation, composition, grammar etc., all teaching of English is confined to the prescribed text-books and extensive reading is neglected. The teaching of English in many schools is on the same lines as classical languages. Teachers take recourse to translation. What language ability can develop in the pupils under these circumstances ?

### **Scope of the Research Work :**

At this juncture, when the new experiment has had a trial of about six to eight years it is essential to see how far

the aims and principles laid down have been successfully achieved. This should be done with the object of intensive study of the pupils' performance in the same year when the secondary schooling terminates. The study of written work becomes very important because the ability to express one's thoughts in writing is badly required in life.

Composition means the building up of sentences. It is the most important part of the pupils' written work. For a pupil to write well, one thing is required, viz. much exercise of his own style. But the question arises, does he get the exercise? Does he get this exercise regularly at fixed intervals? Does he succeed in writing well after writing all the exercises? The answers that we get to these questions are mostly disappointing. Why? What is wrong with written English composition? What measures should be taken to improve it? Can we create interest in composition?

The present investigation humbly aims at finding answers to these questions. The study gives thought to local situations that help or hinder English learning process. The illustrations in this study represent the common errors made by the secondary school children in general and the S. S. C. pupils of the Baroda District in particular and are the result of observations covering a period of two years and more.

### **Criteria of Correctness :**

What do we expect from our pupils? English as a school subject stands on a different footing from all other subjects. Present day pupils cannot adopt all the linguistic niceties of the English language. We expect that our pupils pick up a working knowledge of English. The pupils should be able to speak English with a fair and justifiable sense of intonation and pronunciation and his writing besides being simple and clear, should be free from grave grammatical faults. We have to bear in mind that the S. S. C. pupils in

the Gujarat State have to learn English only for four years. The bogus purple patch and the wild generalization should be discouraged. The matter should be divided into suitable paragraphs and the sentences should be connected with one another in thought. Words selected must be suitable. The S. S. C. pupil should know the ordinary uses of the marks of punctuation. There should be uniformity of alignment, uniformity of slant, correct formation of all parts of letters, and evenness of stroke. Letters should not be too crowded together, nor should words. They must know the spelling of the common words that they learn. The S. S. C. pupil should know the ordinary rules of grammar-rules regarding the agreement of the verb with the subject, the use of different parts of speech, the sequence of tenses, the marks of punctuation and indirect narration.

### **The Investigation Done**

With a view to getting a perfect, representative sample and obtaining useful results, experienced teachers were consulted and schools situated in urban as well as in rural areas were selected and visited. No important section of pupils of the Baroda district was left out. Ten schools situated in the city and eight in the district were selected from different areas. Girls' schools as well as mixed schools were selected to make the sample include the various qualities of the population. During the visits more care was taken for the sample rather than for the number of note-books. The errors were collected first and analysed at home at leisure. Informal interviews were held with the experienced teachers and principals of different schools, the views were exchanged; and the suggestions were noted. For the improvement of spelling six remedial suggestions were supplied to ten experienced teachers who were requested to give weightage to each.

More than 500 note-books were scrutinized and 10,500 common errors were collected. These errors are

tabulated at their proper places in the pages that follow and the suggestions made by different experienced teachers are also incorporated.

### Classification of Mistakes

Language helps the student study a subject. It is an open sesame to the store-house of knowledge. Ideas cannot be expressed effectively if one does not have that "Alladin's lamp"—the language. How are we to develop language ability in our pupils? In order to enable ourselves to face the herculean task we have to classify the errors. We must know what mistakes our pupils make and how often. Unless we classify the errors and know them we can neither draw a correct inference as to why the pupils tend to make these mistakes nor suggest any remedies. It is true that errors defy classification as one kind of errors merges into another at times. However, the common errors found in the composition work were studied in the following groups :

I. Mistakes connected with the choice and use of subject-matter, *e.g.* misunderstanding the title ; irrelevance ; inconsistency, and exaggeration.

II. Mistakes of structure, *e.g.* non-English construction, wrong-word order ; wrong use of words and expressions ; incomplete sentences ; mixed constructions ; and carelessness in the use of pronouns.

III. Mechanical inaccuracies, *e.g.* mis-spellings ; wrong punctuations and wrong use of capitals ; wrong use of articles, number, tenses, passive constructions, omission of prepositions and of infinitives.

IV. Miscellaneous errors, such as, wrong use of principles ; mistakes in framing negative sentences ; mistakes in framing interrogative sentences ; mistakes connected with the sequence of tenses ; ambiguity ; vernacularism.

V. Mistakes connected with methodical writing such as, writing English under the line ; omission of titles, dates, exercise number ; attempts at fine writing ; improper and/or no division of the subject-matter into paragraphs.

## II

### MISTAKES CONNECTED WITH THE CHOICE AND USE OF SUBJECT-MATTER

During the research work a number of exercise books were found to have contained mistakes as under :

( i ) *Misunderstanding the title*: Titles consisting of a single word, e.g. " Fairs ", " Postman ", " Floods ", were not misunderstood. But, where the titles were specifically defined, the pupils failed to understand them well and digressed. In some cases, it was found that some pupils had developed stories from outlines and had even answered all questions given below a passage set for comprehension but had given wrong titles to them. The same thing was true in the case of exercises on precis-writing,

Such misunderstanding occurs when the topic is hurriedly discussed or when the pupil is inattentive. It also shows that the habit of thinking precisely has not been properly cultivated.

It is, therefore, very essential to see that the title of the essay is clearly understood and that the discussion besides being interesting, secures full attention of the pupils. If this is not-done, the essay will appear to be a form of a draft or an ill-digested and unsystematic series of incidents.

( ii ) *Irrelevance, Inconsistency and Exaggeration*: When called upon to describe ' A Visit to a Theatre ' some students described the people at the theatre ; some, the place where it was situated ; some described how people shouted and struggled at the box office ; some described the behaviour of the audience in the pit class.

Similarly errors of inconsistency were not infrequent. While developing the outlines of a story a pupil wrote :

" Ramesh lives in Bombay. Once upon a time he went to the other city for some private work. The night was

dark. Ramesh was afraid. Suddenly he saw an inn."

The pupil failed to clarify how he could see the inn "suddenly", though "the night was dark".

Pointed questions and the frequent repetitions of answers will brush aside the possibility of such mistakes. Undue haste at the discussion stage will result in developing loop-holes in the development of a consistent story.

Inaccuracy in essay-writing is not always due to ignorance. It is sometimes the result of laziness or indifference on the part of the pupils. An indifferent pupil wrote "Thanking you in anticipation", at the close of his letter to the post-master of his town. Through this letter he merely informed the post-master that he was going out to a distant place for a fortnight and requested him to redirect his letters to the new address.

If irrelevance is worse exaggeration is the worst of all faults. A student who wrote the story of "The Cap-seller and the Monkeys" dwelt upon the poverty of the cap-seller and wrote:

"He was living from hand to mouth. He had not a loving wife. He had no children. He had no parents. He was quite alone in this wide world".

Another student who wanted to say that the S.S.C. results are declared in June wrote:

"In this month we reap the fruits of our hard work or suffer for our laziness. We laugh heartily in the house or cry bitterly in sorrow....."

One student described "A bus conductor" as:

"The conductor is the master of the bus and not the driver. The conductor punishes some persons, if a passenger is without a ticket".

Such attempts at fine writing and bombast lead the pupil to a maze. Ignorance, indolence, or indifference

account for these errors. Carelessness in revising the written matter was responsible for the blunder :

“ He spoke less but much ”.

The subject of the essay may be announced a week earlier. If possible, the students may be divided into groups and asked to gather information about the working of a post-office, the duties of a conductor and so on. This will help the students to think and plan and to avoid mistakes. To prevent the chance of copying the pupils may be asked to write without the help of any previously written material.

Wrong use of language, inaccurate and irrelevant statements and carelessness obscure all exercises in composition.



### III

#### MISTAKES OF STRUCTURE

Under this general heading we may include a great variety of composition faults such as :

(i) *Non-English Construction* : Frequency : 492

#### Illustrations :

I shall give the examination in May.  
Three swinging bars came into the ring of the circus.  
Our house came after half-an-hour.  
I and my friend were also praying God.  
We will go in Arts and not Science.  
I was very enjoyed.  
After, King asked him, who are you ?  
Twenty boy's and Girl's went into tour.  
I am happy here and you will be happy there.  
The watch goes behind.  
He came in slowly, slowly to see Rahul.  
Tapti river loose limit and water went station.  
We went on the station.  
Mohan is clever in counting example.  
My hairs are black.  
Why you study the English ?  
I go to the barber to cut my hair.

#### Inferences :

- (a) Some of these constructions are the direct results of the gravitational pull exercised by the pupil's vernacular collocation.
- (b) Usage of English is not thoroughly mastered by the pupils.

#### Remedies :

- (a) A thorough drilling should be given in the correct usage.

- (b) Practical use of the language should be emphasized.
- (c) Table of the following type may be compiled and used in the class-room :

**Specimen Table**

TABLE—I

I wish	I had some books. today was Sunday.
Don't you wish	I knew the answer ? you were right ? we all were here ?

(ii) *Wrong word order* : Frequency : 630

English language demands that the words which make a sentence must be placed in a particular order. Here are the illustrations in which the word order is disturbed:

All teachers are good in my school.

I went yesterday to the cinema.

He comes often late.

I only saw him once after that.

He asked me what did I do.

He talks always much.

He begged the teacher to not punish him.

Not only he speaks well, but writes well also.

I went to Baroda at my friend's home named Kanu.

We must hard work in our study.

**Inferences :**

- (a) Pupils do not know where adverbs of time and place and words like 'enough', 'not', 'only' should be placed.
- (b) Pupils are tempted to string together dependent phrases and clauses at the end of a sentence.

## Remedies

- (a) Use of suitable substitution tables should be made in all classes.
- (b) Pupils should be taught directly, to begin with the main clause and to add subordinate clauses to it.
- (c) Use of exercises in correction of sentences in Std. X and XI.

(iii) *Mistakes of Pattern*: Frequency: 1003

“In acquiring the habit of linguistic expression in a foreign tongue, our constant difficulty is the deep-seated linguistic habits already acquired”.<sup>1</sup> Mistakes of pattern can be broadly classified as under :

(A) *Dependent clauses treated as independent, e.g. :*

Because my friend is very kind.

Though it was Sunday.

As I knew that the place selected was a hill station.

(B) *Determinatives wrongly placed, e.g. :*

His all dramas.

Her all books were lost.

Both we enjoyed the tour.

(C) *Frequency adverbs wrongly placed, e.g.*

We must read always English books.

He did not read but often he sing.

(D) *Relative clause wrongly placed, e.g. :*

Who will work hard, he must pass.

Who will be careful of time, he must be happy.

(E) *Direct object placed far away from the main verb, e.g. :*

All type of good things we can find in it.

All sorts of collections we can find in a museum.

---

<sup>1</sup> E. C. Kittson: *Theory and Practice of Language Teaching*; p. 20.

(F) *Auxiliaries misplaced in an interrogative sentence, e.g.*

What kind of pen we should use ?

Tell me how did he come ?

Why you did went ?

### **Inferences:**

The pupil has but an insecure control over the following aspects of his material :

- (a) He is in difficulties about sentence-patterns.
- (b) He is in difficulties about the construction of phrase-patterns and collocations.
- (c) He fails to discriminate correctly between the English conventions regarding tense, usage, condition, conversion, indirect speech, and those prevalent in his vernacular.
- (d) He is uncertain in his realization of the grammatical requirements which arise in connection with structural words of which neither, each, one, are a few examples.

### **Remedies:**

- (a) Formulating suitable drills with the help of tables specimen of which is given below ;
- (b) Deliberate teaching of word-order where necessary ;
- (c) Discussion of the mistakes of pattern.

### **Specimen Table**

TABLE 2

I know	why he called me.
I wish I knew	where he is.
	when it took place.
	what he wanted.
I don't know	who she was.
	who was there.
I can't think	why you want me.
He did not tell	what you want.
	why you are here.

- (iv) *Wrong use of words and expressions*: Frequency : 1221.

The first requisite of good writing is clearness. In order to be clear in one's statements one must weigh carefully the exact meaning of one's words. Here are some illustrations of the wrong use of words :

I *take* eight subjects except the maths.

I took *interview* of Kankaria.

The judge *called* the lady in court.

He was dismissed *do* to that.

Please convey my *B.C.* to all.

Please tell my *pranams* to parents.

#### **Inferences:**

- (a) Proper emphasis is not laid on the practical use of the language.
- (b) The translation method mostly used in the lower classes fails to provide the student with adequate opportunity to be thoroughly acquainted with behaviour of words.
- (c) Verbosity sometimes leads to vagueness.
- (d) Repetition of the same idea in different words shows that one of the commonest sources of weakness in composition is inadequate command of vocabulary.

#### **Remedies:**

- (a) The libraries of the schools must be fully equipped with books for extra-reading suitable to different standards.
- (b) One or two periods per week should be devoted to conversation in English in Stds. VIII, IX and X.
- (c) The dictionary habit should be cultivated in pupils.

- ( d ) New words should be taught in their contexts.  
 ( e ) Different exercises in choice of words, order of words etc. should be used in lower standards.

### Specimen exercise in choice of words :

#### Exercise I

#### Instructions:

1. Choose the best out of the given words.
2. Use each word only once.

#### Words:

normal, familiar, uniform, ordinary, natural, usual.

His face is quite——to me.

I shall be there at the——time.

It is quite——that I should be glad.

Mahatma Gandhi is no——man.

Her temperature is quite——.

The students are in——.

#### Exercise 2

#### Instruction:

Fill in the following blanks with the appropriate words :

Invented } Edison——the gramophone.

Discovered } Columbus——America.

Accept } They will all——the invitation———

Except } Kanubhai.

May } ——you do this exercise ?

Can } ——I leave the room ?

Stop } The train will——at the next town.

Stay } and we shall——there three days.

( v ) *Incomplete Sentences* : Frequency : 228

This is one of the most careless faults, sometimes found when the pupils attempt long, involved sentences and lose sight of the main verb.

**Illustrations:**

Yours of the 10th inst. to hand.

Thanking you in anticipation.

A clown dressed gaudily and two acrobates dressed attractively.

**Inference:**

- (a) Pupils' knowledge of correct sentence pattern is not satisfactory.

**Remedies:**

- (a) Pupils should be encouraged to write short sentences.
- (b) Exercises in comprehension, omission of unnecessary conjunctions etc. may be used.
- (c) Substitution tables may be used freely.
- (d) Pupils should be made to revise their exercise before they submit it to the teacher.
- (vi) *Mixed Constructions*: Frequency: 180

If the pupil can manage to work in the clauses correctly there can be no objection to reasonably long sentences. But very often they cannot. Here are such illustrations:

I know how you study and your friends had failed at the terminal examination.

The lion cried and said, "who is that stupid fellow why did he stop you and show me".

Thieves ran away but farmer's sleep was broken and threw a spade and killed the dog barked loudly.

**Inferences:**

- (a) Pupils' command over the language is inadequate.
- (b) They wish to decorate their language.
- (c) Sometimes they make haste to finish the exercise in time and use 'and', 'but', 'either....or' indiscriminately.

**Remedies:**

- (a) Pupils should be encouraged to write short sentences in simple, correct English.

- (b) In higher classes the pupil may be asked to analyse a long sentence written by him or by any other pupil. Difficulties in analysis will suggest the necessity of removing the unnecessary connectives.
- (c) Exercises in changing the order of words, substitution tables etc. may be framed and used freely in the class.

### Specimen Table

TABLE 3

Did he	eat it ? drink it ? build it ? read it ? like it ? etc.	I want to know	if whether	he she	ate it liked it drank it built it read it etc.
--------	--	-------------------	---------------	-----------	---

### Specimen Exercise

#### Exercise 3

#### Instruction:

Re-write the following sentences so that there shall be a balance of form corresponding to a balance of meaning.  
*e.g.* Walking is a healthy exercise, and so is to play cricket.  
 Ans. Walking is a healthy exercise, and so is playing cricket.

#### Sentences:

1. They accused Mr. Beg of deliberately losing his wicket, and that he had been very lazy in the field.
2. He was a kind father, a good husband, and worked faithfully for his master.
3. Don't go elsewhere to be robbed. Come to me.

(vii) *Carelessness in the use of Pronouns* : Frequency

141

Pronouns like 'he', 'she', 'they', 'it', 'one' and relative pronouns like, 'who', 'which' are often used in a



vague way without any clear indication of what they represent. This habit often results in ambiguity, *e. g.*

The class was so noisy that they had to send for the principal.

One cannot do his work in a noisy class-room.

I visited a city whose name is Baroda.

Who lives for the good of all can be praised.

You are more beautiful than her.

Every one gave their consent.

#### Inferences:

(a) Pupils do not know the correct use of Personal and Relative Pronouns.

(b) They do not know the correct usage.

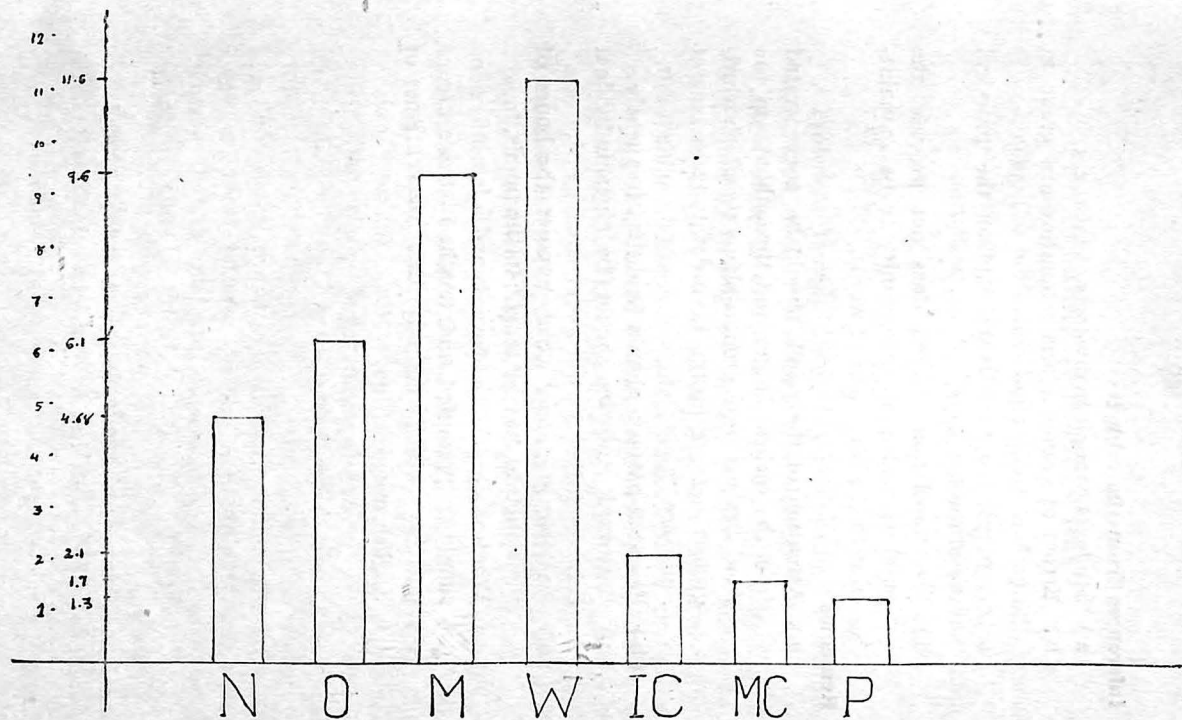
#### Remedy:

(a) Correct uses of pronouns should be drilled effectively with the help of suitable substitution tables.

The following table and the Bar-graph represent a classified list of language mistakes discussed here. Mistakes are indicated by symbols, their frequency counts and percentage of occurrence. A cursory glance at the graph will give a clear idea of the frequency of mistakes.

TABLE 4  
Showing Language Mistakes of Structure

Sr. No.	Categories	Symbols	Frequency	Percentage
1	Non-English construction	n	492	4.68
2	Wrong word-order	o	630	06.1
3	Mistakes of pattern	m	1003	09.6
4	Wrong use of words and expressions	w	1221	11.6
5	Incomplete sentences	ic	228	2.1
6	Mixed constructions	mc	180	1.7
7	carelessness in the use of pronouns	p	141	1.3



Bar Graph Representing Language Mistakes Against Percentage

**Inferences from the table :**

- ( a ) Students commit many sorts of mistakes.
- ( b ) Errors of grammar and semantics are great in number.
- ( c ) A proper emphasis is not laid on the practical use of the language.
- ( d ) The translation method does not provide the pupil with adequate opportunity to be acquainted with the behaviour of words.

**Remedies :**

- ( a ) Attention of the pupils should be concentrated from the earliest stages and throughout, on the fixed designs and ground-plans to which word-groups must conform in order to make correct sentences.
- ( b ) Essential patterns should be drilled frequently.
- ( c ) Backward students should be given individual help.
- ( d ) Analytic grammar, which exposes the bones of the structure may be taught to the pupils.
- ( e ) Word-order, structural words and a few inflexions should be presented and taught in the sentence patterns which embody the conventions of English usage.

### III

#### MECHANICAL INACCURACIES

Among the most common pitfalls in English are mis-spellings, wrong punctuations, wrong use of articles, number and tenses, wrong use of prepositions and infinitives.

(i) *Mis-spellings*: Frequency: 1674.

Professor James Welton says, "Spelling is nothing more than memory drawing of the pictures of words, and is never required except when we want to write."<sup>2</sup> In times gone by writing was purely phonetic. Custom and usage of the best writers, teachers, and learned men fixed the spelling of English words. Spoken forms changed in course of time but the extinct forms of speech continued to be written in the same original way. And now speech and spelling have fallen out of harmony. Pronunciation is not a sure guide to our spelling. Because of these irregularities satisfactory rules for guidance have not been found out. The rules which we have formed are more or less qualified by exceptions. Words like 'to', 'two' and 'too'; 'their' and 'there'; 'sees', 'seize', 'seas' and 'cease'; 'accept' and 'except' are differently spelt though their pronunciation is very much the same. While 'come' and 'home', 'cut' and 'put', 'great' and 'cheat' are differently pronounced though they are quite similar in spelling. Many words contain both redundant letters as well as silent letters. 'Fight' and 'night' are words wherein letters 'gh' are unnecessarily added and 'e' is silent in 'house', 'write' and 'gate'.

Discrepancies as quoted above have made the lot of Indian students very hard if not sad. Indian languages

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<sup>2</sup> James Welton: Principles and Methods of Teaching, p. 170.

are phonetic. An average Indian student spells what he pronounces and creates confusion worth confounded.

*He spells:*

Belive	instead	of	believe	Sick	instead	of	seek
Claver	„	„	clever	Leave	„	„	live
Sarvant	„	„	servant	Gate	„	„	get
Marrage	„	„	marriage	Ears	„	„	years
Goat	„	„	got	Hop	„	„	hope
Fild	„	„	field	Later	„	„	letter
Beg	„	„	bag	End	„	„	and
Bad	„	„	bed	Dose	„	„	does
Pray	„	„	prey	Lion	„	„	line
Quite	„	„	quiet	On	„	„	no
Rode	„	„	road	No	„	„	Know
Through	„	„	threw	Their	„	„	there
Meat	„	„	meet	Here	„	„	hear
Met	„	„	mat	Send	„	„	Sand

and so on.

The following Table shows the confusion of letters:

TABLE 5

Instead of	Replacing						Omitting	Adding
	a	e	i	o	u	y		
a	—	38	14	45	3	—	38	31
e	48	—	46	15	10	2	93	74
i	19	52	—	—	11	20	38	21
o	27	31	2	—	10	—	26	21
u	18	7	10	12	—	—	29	25

The following table shows the causes of mis-spellings :

TABLE 6

Sr. No.	Causes of Mis-spelling	Frequency	Examples
1	Weakness in auditory analysis and discrimination	201	villager, marriage, yong, servant
2	Neglect of details of words :		
	(a) omissions of letters	202	mad, tun, gon
	(b) additions of letters	190	allready, well come
	(c) substitutions	74	no(know); were(where)
3	Over-emphasizing the auditory aspect but neglecting visual components :		
	(a) omissions	135	welth, fild
	(b) substitutions	273	than, dask, claver
	(c) additions	157	dwell, until
	(d) both (b) and (c)	80	is (his), or (are)
4	Weak visualization		
	(a) Transposition of letters	60	strom, form, clam
	(b) confusion of visually similar letters, e.g. b, d, m, n.	42	dabe, dop, doy
	(c) substitution of letters	74	mane, bental
	(d) Reversal of short words	62	santer, insence
5	Other cases	124	
	Total	1,674	

Here is a table which shows vowel confusion on the part of the pupils.

TABLE 7

Causes of errors							Total confusions
	i: instead of i and vice versa	e instead of æ & ð and vice versa	ð instead of ð: & a: and vice versa	u instead of u: and vice versa	ʌ instead of ð: and vice versa		
I Weakness in auditory analysis and discrimination	44	26	29	52	50	201	
II Substitution caused by over-emphasizing the auditory aspect	66	41	37	69	60	273	
III Additions caused by over-emphasizing the auditory aspect	35	40	20	40	22	157	

Of the three types it was found that pupils committed more mistakes by substitution caused by over-emphasizing the auditory aspect. Mistakes caused by weakness of auditory analysis and discrimination are 201. The frequency count of the third type is comparatively low. The table shows what sounds are generally mixed up.

We draw the following conclusions :

- ( a ) A large number of mistakes in substitution caused by auditory aspect are due to the fact that pupils mix up u sound with u: and ʌ sound with ɒ : and vice versa.
- ( b ) Among mistakes caused by weakness in auditory analysis and discrimination it was found that a large number of mistakes were due to the confusion between u and u: and ʌ and ɒ : sounds.
- ( c ) Mistakes of additions caused by over-emphasizing the auditory aspect were the direct result of the confusion among e - and æ and u and u: sounds and vice versa.

Of the other types of spelling-mistakes, the following were to be found in the pupils' exercise books :

- ( a ) Some students showed a tendency to put capital letters in the middle of words *e.g.* KItten; re-Quest; orPhan; obJect; sHip bIll; cheQue, etc.
- ( b ) There were a few mistakes in structural patterns, *e.g.*  
This is my teacher book.  
Fifty boy's went on a tour.  
He want's some water.  
The teacher's were present at 7-00 a.m.
- ( c ) Some words were wrongly broken, *e.g.* be half; wel come; Police man; head master; all together; well known; to day; no body; him self; where as; etc.

#### **Inferences drawn from the table showing causes of Mis-Spellings**

- ( a ) Weakness of visual perception is responsible for causing 238 mistakes. Pupils even emphasize the



auditory aspects of spelling and neglect the visual components.

- ( b ) Causal facts enumerated under the first and the fourth items of the Table are characteristic of the pupils reading for the S.S.C. examination.
- ( c ) About 26% mistakes were the result of vowel confusion.
- ( d ) The following type of words having the same phonetic elements but different patterns were mis-spelled :

There ( their ) ; were ( wear ) ; bad ( bed ) ; whether ( weather ) ; see ( she ) ; sit ( seat ) ; threw ( through ) ; rich ( reach ) ; no ( know ) ; sand ( send ) ; accept ( except ) .

Phonetic affinity of mis-spellings with the correct forms of words is the main reason of the mistakes quoted above.

- ( e ) Pupils rely more on the visual components of a word than on its pronunciations.
- ( f ) The study suggests that correct spelling should become habitual with our pupils *i.e.* the pupils should be able to spell words correctly without interfering with the trend of his thought in writing. The pupils should develop a spelling sense so that a faulty spelling looks wrong.

#### Remedies:

- ( a ) Pupils should not be taught to spell words which they are not going to use in their composition.
- ( b ) Incorrect forms should never be seen by the pupils.
- ( c ) With young children rhythmic repetition is psychologically sound. Teachers should fix fundamentals in the pupils' mind through drill.

( d ) Words should be grouped in small units according to some rational plan *e.g.*

( i ) Association of words of similar auditory and visual elements as in :

power	cat	bill
cower	pat	pill
tower	sat	mill

( ii ) Association of words of similar visual, but slightly dissimilar auditory elements as in

stove	pound	large
glove	bound	charge
prove	found	strange

( iii ) Association of words, according to both common elements and contexts as in

needle	stove	marriage
thimble	glove	carriage
button	cover	notorious
cotton	shelter	injurious

( iv ) Association of words having a common silent letter as in

knee	comb	rustle
kneel	crumb	whistle
knock	thumb	wrestle
knob	climb	bustle

( v ) Attention should be paid to the correct pronunciation of words as defective pronunciation is a great source of misspelling.

(vi) "Only a few words should be presented at a time".<sup>3</sup> The child is dismayed by the formidable task which a long list of words presents.

(vii) Spellings that cause vowel confusions should be collected and attention of the pupils should be focussed to those vowel parts of words that cause confusion *e.g.*

recEive	recei <u>ve</u>	rece <u>ive</u>
separ <u>A</u> te	separ <u>a</u> te	separ <u>e</u> te
serv <u>A</u> nt	serv <u>a</u> nt	serv <u>e</u> nt

(e) The spelling of words is firmly fixed in the mind by combination of visual, auditory, articulatory and grapho-motor impressions. Two devices, one introducing supplementary kinesthetic and the other tactile sensory impressions, can often be profitably utilized. In the former the child traces the word in large letters, either in the air with his fingers, or on the desk with the unsharpened end of his pencil. In the later, he runs his finger tips over the word, the letters of which have been cut out in sand paper or in velvet pile. This device can be profitably used with a few pupils who experience unusual difficulty in learning to spell.

(f) Children should be encouraged to use the words learned in composition or to embody them in English exercises.

(g) Words of the same sound but different spelling should be taught separately.

(h) Spelling games should be used freely.

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<sup>3</sup> T. K. N. Menon & M. S. Patel: The Teaching of English as a Foreign Language; p. 123.

- ( i ) Weekly and monthly revisions of words consolidate progress made and repay expenditure of time and energy.
- ( j ) Children should be encouraged to keep a small note-book, with an alphabetical index, in which they record errors made in composition and during specific lessons in the subject. This will familiarize them with dictionaries.
- ( k ) Dictionary habit is an aid to orthography. It inculcates a desire for correct spelling and emphasizes visual form and relative letter order of words. . So it should be cultivated.
- ( l ) Dictation trains the hearing capacity of the pupils. It is of great value in fixing spelling already acquired. At least one period a week should be allotted to dictation in classes upto std. X. The passage for dictation must contain words known to the pupils.
- ( m ) The teacher can make up a list of words which most of the pupils have misspelt. These words may be hung on the walls in a chart form for a week till they are replaced by others.
- ( n ) Bad spelling is frequently due to carelessness rather than ignorance. The pupil should be inspired to be proud of his composition work and to revise the exercise as soon as it is finished.

Here is a Table showing weightage given by eight experienced teachers. They were given eight suggestions for eradicating spelling mistakes and asked to give scores out of 100 for each category.