

**ERROR ANALYSIS IN HOMOPHONIC SOUNDS:
A STUDY OF SECONDARY LEVEL
STUDENTS IN BILASPUR**

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Abstract

English is considered as second language or foreign language to the Indian students. So for understanding English language, learning is the important factor because this language is acquired intentionally by learning and through continuous practice. In present scenario it is seen that students face problem in pronunciation of English words and because of this sometimes they commit silly mistakes while writing. There are several words which have same spelling or different spelling but same pronunciation and difference in meaning, so sometime students are not able to differentiate between those words, may be because of lack of vocabulary and wrong pronunciation. Words which are pronounced in the same way but different in spelling and meaning are known as homophones. The present study aim at diagnosing and analysing the errors made by secondary level students while writing homophonic sounds and to find out the causes of errors. For the purpose of investigation one self-made questionnaire tool is prepared for the students for testing their knowledge about homophones and another set of questionnaire tool is prepared for both students and teachers to find out the root cause of errors in homophones. The sample comprised of 216 students of class IXth studying in CBSE affiliated schools in Bilaspur. The findings of the study revealed that errors occur by the students due to i) the lack of comprehending the meaning or due to the lack of lexical knowledge about homophones ii) Lack of vocabulary or maybe they are not aware of the denotation of those homophone words as they are not in the habit of reading books or using dictionary iii) Wrong pronunciation, lack of morphological knowledge leads to error in writing as they hesitate to speak in English. iv) most of the students don't have the habit of reading books and using dictionary and as a result they don't have enough vocabulary power.

Key Words: English Language, English Teaching, Homophonic Sounds

INTRODUCTION

India is a country with diverse cultures, languages and communities and where several hundred mother tongues are used. English is one and only common language that is used and accepted by people from different backgrounds to exchange their ideas and thoughts. Today English is one of the important languages in Indian education system. English is an international language as well. Without knowledge of English language we are not able to establish any kind of relationship with other nations because English is the only language through which we communicate with other nations. The government of India along with the state Governments has introduced the English language from the grass root level for generating the awareness of the importance of English language at the national as well as international level. Bruner and Kennedy (1966) have described language as an 'Invitation to form a concept'. Language plays the principal directive factor in instigating, controlling and organizing behaviour. Olson (1970) studied pervasive effects of language upon memory. It was found that it facilitates recall through the use of labelling or rehearsal because of its effects on attention through syntactic as well as semantic factors. He viewed that language is a necessary prerequisite for the original development of culture.

The National Curriculum Frame Work (2005) states – “Language also provides a bank of memories and symbols inherited from one's fellow speakers and created in one's own life time”. At the secondary level language occupies a pivotal place in curriculum. Language speaking is essentially a skill. The four basic skills of English language are Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing. These skills help an individual to comprehend and use the language for effective communication. Sometimes students consider English as the most difficult subject and there are several factors behind this notion like lack of vocabulary power, fear of speaking English due to less vocabulary, students only receive knowledge from the teacher and they are not trying to explore the knowledge by themselves, no proper knowledge of rules and regulations of English language as it is the second language for Indian natives. Homophone is one of the most confusing things in English language.

Homophones are two or more words that are pronounced in the same way but differ in spellings as well as meaning. Example: Root and Route are homophonic words and the meanings of both words are “origin” or “source” and “the way” respectively. Both these words are pronounced in the same way /ru:t/. Homophones mainly occur in English as there are several ways to spell the same sound.

Example: The sound of /n/ can be spelled with the letter “N” like Night /nait/ and the letter combination “KN” like Knight /nait/, resulting in the homophones Night and Knight. The meaning of both the words Night and Knight is the time of darkness and a soldier in the past who had a high social rank respectively.

Similarly the vowel diphthong /ei/ can be pronounced with the word Rain /rein/ as well as Reign /rein/ which resulted into homophones Rain and Reign. Both the words have different spellings as well as different meanings. The meaning of rain is downfall and reign means royal authority. Because of lack of lexical knowledge, students confuse with homophones and thus misinterpret them.

Effective communication means not only using technological and difficult words but using correct words is necessary for successfully conveying the information to the receiver and get back proper feedback. Specially in case of writing we have to take care of spellings so that the receiver understands what the sender wants to convey because incorrect choice of words change the meaning of the sentence and convey some different message to the receiver. It has become evident that misuse of homophones is concern issue because homophones are pronounced in same way like where and were. Both words have same pronunciation but differ in meaning so students are confused and because of this confusion they misinterpret. There are numerous advantages of using homophones as discussed below:

- (1) If we are not using proper homophones in the particular context, it may change the whole meaning of the sentence

and so proper knowledge of homophones is very important.

- (2) Using 'night' instead of 'knight', 'wood' instead of would, 'advise' instead of 'advice', 'way' instead of weigh etc may change the meaning of the sentence and ruin the beauty of our writing. Above words are exactly the same in pronunciation but there is a huge difference in spelling as well as meaning. Therefore, it is essential to understand homophones for an effective writing.
- (3) If an individual doesn't understand the proper usage of words, the written communication will be screwed up completely. Phonetics and homophones are the basics of communication. Until and unless an individual has the knowledge of phonetics and homophones and the proper usage of homophones, his/her written communication is not meaningful and effective to other people.
- (4) It's important for children to recognize homophones because learning them helps children to grasp the context of sentence that have words having same pronunciation but different meaning. Writing right word is very important so that the sender don't convey the wrong information.

Example: The tornado destroyed the whole city. The alternative homophone of the word 'Whole' is 'Hole'. If the student writes 'hole' instead of 'whole', the sentence doesn't have any meaning because the meaning of 'hole' is “a hollow place in the ground” and the meaning of 'whole' is “complete” or “full”.

- (5) Knowing homophones increase the vocabulary power of the students as well as gain confidence among them to write as well as speak in English.

If the students have knowledge of vocabulary or reading habit of English books or newspapers, they become competent in understanding the difference among homophones because they differentiate the meanings of homophones.

In present scenario it is seen that students are not pronouncing properly and sometimes they are doing silly mistakes while writing.

There are several words which have same spellings or different spellings but same pronunciation and those words have different meanings and so sometimes students are not able to differentiate between those words because of not knowing the meaning of words or wrong pronunciation or unawareness. They also do some silly mistakes while speaking as well as writing. For example: rose and rose: one 'rose' meaning flower and another 'rose' is the past tense of rise. Sometimes, students are not able to pronounce in a correct way and not able to distinguish between the homophonic words which create problem in their writing in terms of spelling error as well as understanding the meaning of those words. One of the long standing issues in research on visual word recognition concerns the role of phonology.

RATIONALE

English is the second language or foreign language for the Indian students. So for understanding English language, learning is the important factor because this language is not acquired unintentionally. In Indian context, students face lots of problem in speaking, reading and writing English language because of interference of mother tongue. Fatima (2011) identified that the learners sociolinguistic background plays a pivot role in determining their language quality and learning efficiency. Mukaromah (2012) demonstrated that students sometimes commit spelling errors because of the interference of language 1 as well as incorrect pronunciation of words. It is seen that sometimes students seem English as the toughest subject and develop fear to speak or write because they don't have so much vocabulary power and their environment doesn't support them to bloom as well. Therefore, besides mother tongue or regional language students have to be encouraged to listen, speak, read and write in English language, so that they become competent in English language and they are not afraid to speak or write in English. Sometimes, these fears are the reason of dropout of the students. For acquiring the English language ability each and every factor is important like understanding the rules and regulations of grammar, phonetics, sounds, writing skills, meaning of words etc.

National Policy on Education (1986) emphasises on Three Language Formula where English language is compulsory subject in each & every school irrespective of any board at Secondary level. In India, English language is used as official language. So, knowing this language is very important. It is become evident that besides the rules of grammar, most of the time students are unaware about the spelling as well as the meaning of the words. Bancha (2013) noticed that the main cause of spelling errors of students is due to the lack of morphological knowledge, limited knowledge of orthography or spelling. Kumar (2013) stated that students commit spelling errors due to several reasons like learners' inability to discriminate between sounds, wrong pronunciation, grapheme phoneme mismatch, homophonous similar words and syllables, flawed deviation, incomprehensible spelling errors, incorrect word boundary etc. It is evident that besides the rules of grammar, most of the time students are unaware of the spelling as well as the meaning of words. The words which seem alike, they often get confused with those words and misinterpret. Homophones create ambiguity among the students as both the words have same pronunciation but spelling is different. While hearing homophones students sometimes misinterpret between two words and cause errors in writing homophones. Error analysis helps to identify cause of errors and types of errors. In this study the researcher tried to analyse the errors in writing homophones so that we can find out the root cause of errors specially in homophones which create great confusion among students most of the time.

OBJECTIVES

1. To diagnose the errors made by secondary level students while writing homophonic sounds.
2. To analyze the errors made by secondary level students while writing homophonic sounds.
3. To find out the causes of error in homophonic sounds

METHODOLOGY

The methodology of the present study is given below:

POPULATION

The population of the present study comprised of all the secondary level CBSE Board students of Bilaspur. The total number of population consists of all the students of class IXth of CBSE Board schools of Chhattisgarh state.

SAMPLE

For the present study, five schools from Bilaspur, Chhattisgarh were selected. The students are from class IXth. Total sample of the study was 216 (two hundred and sixteen) from five schools, out of 216 students, 87 are girls and rest 129 are boys.

TOOLS

The researcher developed the self made tools for this study. Two types of tools were mainly used.

- a) One Questionnaire tool is for students to test their knowledge about homophones.
- b) Another Questionnaire tool is for both students and teachers to find out the root cause of errors in homophones.

DATA ANALYSIS

The collected answer sheets and tests were evaluated. Data are analysed according to the dimension as there are five dimensions in this study like identification of homophones, Identification of homophones with suitable meanings, writing alternative homophones, Frame sentence with homophones, rewrite the passage by substituting correct homophones. Boys and girls scores were analyzed and interpreted through percentage. Students' responses were also analyzed and interpreted item wise to show in which items, students have mostly committed error. As the study was qualitative in nature, the data were analyzed by using content analysis, frequency counting, and percentage analysis.

FINDINGS

Findings Related to Identification of Correct Homophones

In this test, students have to select a correct homophone which is

suitable with the given sentence. Through this test, the researcher tries to identify the lexical knowledge of homophones of the students. 84.26% of boys and 83.1% of girls made correct response in identifying the correct homophones whereas, 15.74% of boys and 16.9% of girls made incorrect response in identifying homophones. The average correct response was 83.68% and average incorrect response was 16.32%. Maximum students were able to identify correct homophones. Errors committed by the students were due to the lack of comprehending the meaning or due to the lack of lexical knowledge about homophones as well.

Findings Related to Identification of Homophones with suitable meanings in terms of puzzle

Among 129 boys and 87 girls, 88.32% of boys and 87.03% of girls made correct response in identifying homophones which are suitable according to the meaning given in the test, whereas 11.07% of boys and 13% of girls made incorrect response in identifying correct homophones with suitable meaning. The average correct response was 87.67% and average incorrect response was 12.3%. It shows that maximum students were able to make correct response or able to identify correct homophones. The responses may be incorrect due to the lack of comprehending the meaning or maybe they are not aware the denotation of those homophone words as they were not habituated to reading books, using dictionary.

Findings Related to Writing Alternative Homophones

Out of 129 boys and 87 girls, 58.14% of boys and 41.86% of girls were able to write correct alternative homophones whereas, 66.20% of boys and 33.80% of girls were not able to write correct alternative homophones. The average correct response was 62.17% and average incorrect response was 37.83%. Maximum students were able to write alternative homophones of the given word. The ratio of the correct response of the girls was higher than the boys. Though many students identify the correct alternative homophone they committed error in writing spelling because they don't have the lexical skill and syntactic ability. Wrong pronunciation, lack of morphological knowledge leads to error in writing as they were hesitating to speak in English. Even in the school environment many

students were using their mother tongue instead of English language.

Findings Related to Frame Sentences with Homophones

Out of 129 boys and 87 girls, 48.84% of boys and 51.16% of girls made correct response whereas, 56.9% of boys and 43.1% of girls were not able to frame the sentence with homophones. The average correct response of the students was 52.87% and average incorrect response was 47.13%. It shows that number of correct response of the girls was more than boys. Ratio of incorrect response is higher in this item compared to other items. The responses may be incorrect due to several reasons like not knowing the alternative homophone of the given word, they were not able to frame the sentence. Some students find out the alternative homophone of the given word but they were not able to frame the sentence because they don't have the semantic knowledge as well as syntactic knowledge as they were afraid of speaking English.

Findings Related to Rewrite the Passage by Substituting Correct Homophones

Among 129 boys and 87 girls, 53.98% of boys and 46.02% of girls made correct response in substituting the homophones given in the test whereas, 52.04% of boys and 47.96% of girls were not able to make correct response. The average correct response of the students was 53.01% and average incorrect response was 46.99%. In this dimension the incorrect response of the girls were higher than the boys. The responses were incorrect due to lack of lexical knowledge. As most of the students don't have the habit of reading books and using dictionary; they are not able to find out the incorrect homophone words from the paragraph.

Findings Related to Students Attitude towards English Language

- 86.82% of boys and 90.8% of girls love to read books. Out of 86.82% of boys, 35.66% of boys love to read Hindi books, 49.61% and 1.55% of boys love to read English and other language books respectively. Out of 90.8% of girls, 18.39% and 71.26% of girls loves to read Hindi and English books respectively. 1.15% of girls love to read other language books. 13.18% of boys and 9.19% of girls are not fond of

reading books.

- 34.11% of boys regularly used dictionary and 62.02% of boys often used dictionary. Among these boys, 17.83% and 76.74% of boys used Hindi-English dictionary and English-Hindi dictionary respectively. 2% of boys used other language dictionary. 35.63% of girls regularly used dictionary and 58.62% of girls often used dictionary. Among these girls, 8.05% and 87.36% of girls used Hindi-English dictionary and English-Hindi dictionary respectively. 3.88% of boys and 5.75% of girls never used dictionary.
- 72.1% of boys used Hindi language at home and 1.55% of boys used English language at home. 26.36% of boys used mother tongue at home. 80.46% of girls used Hindi language at home and 19.54% of girls used mother tongue at home. None of the girls used English language at home.
- 56.69% of boys and 15.5% of boys talk in English and Hindi language at school respectively. 1.55% of boys and 23.26% of boys used mother tongue and bi-lingual at school respectively. 80.46% of girls and 9.19% of girls talk in English and Hindi language at school respectively. 1.15% and 9.19% of girls used mother tongue and bi-lingual at school respectively.
- 87.59% of boys love to watch movies. Out of 87.59% of boys 48.06% and 39.54% of boys love to watch Hollywood and Bollywood movies respectively. 93.1% of girls love to watch movies. Out of 93.1% of girls, 24.14% and 71.26% of girls love to watch Hollywood and Bollywood movies respectively.
- Out of 48.06% of boys who love to watch Hollywood movies, 14.73% of boys are listening Hindi track and 33.33% of boys are listening English track. 31.78% of boys are using subtitle and 16.28% of boys are not using subtitle. Out of 24.14% of girls, 11.49% and 14.94% of girls are listening Hindi and English track respectively. 21.84% of girls are using subtitle and 4.59% of girls are not using subtitle. 12.40% of boys and 6.89% of girls are not fond of watching movies.

- There are several reasons for the errors in homophones which occurred can be analyzed from above interpretation. As many of the students don't read English books, nor speak in English regularly at school or at home, not fond of watching Hollywood movies; they are not able to grow interest towards English language. Because of all these reasons, not able to comprehend the meaning, lack of lexical ability, semantic ability, incorrect pronunciation etc gradually they develop fear among them and leads to error in writing.

Findings Related to Teachers Response towards Error Committed by Students

- The problems that students face while speaking are pronunciation, grammar, sentence formation, lexical ability etc.
- While evaluating the English paper, teachers mostly found the errors like grammatical mistakes and spelling mistakes.
- Remedies were provided to improve students' speaking and vocabulary power, like by arranging special speaking classes, conversation, suggesting for reading newspaper, magazines, etc.

Conclusion

English as an important language in present era for communication and make a relationship with other countries. Written communication is important because sometimes face to face interaction is not possible. While giving written communication message should be clear and there should not be any ambiguity which creates confusion in the readers' mind. So in the field of school education, teachers should take care of written skill of the students besides other skills. From this study, it is found that students mostly committed errors in identifying the alternative homophones and framing the sentence by using homophones. Sometimes homophones create ambiguity among the students as both the words have same pronunciation. They misinterpret while writing homophones. Sometimes students memorize the word without

knowing the meaning and they are not able to use that word appropriately while speaking or writing. For effective communication, knowledge of vocabulary is of utmost importance. And for increasing the lexical ability, they should have the habit of using the dictionary, reading English books or magazines, and trying to talk in English at home and school and with peer groups as well.

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