Writing skill in english among school students of Nagaon : A case study from Nagaon district, Assam.

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Abstract

English is, almost certainly, the most important subject that a child can learn in school. In a multilingual country like India, English language is considered as an essential tool in achieving effective communication. Bad spelling is a hindrance for the reader to get the meaning of written language and any mistake in spelling can affect the written product and may lead to misunderstanding. Therefore, correct spelling of vocabulary is essential to convey the intended meaning. The objectives of the study are to study different types of spelling mistakes in English among the students of Puranigudam Girls' High School, Nagaon along with an assessment of the causes of spelling mistakes and to find out the improvement of students regarding spelling mistakes after using remedial measures. Findings clearly indicate that there are nine types of mistakes that are found among the students. Based on the frequency in which they occurred, substitution of letters ranked highest, followed by omission of letters, single letters instead of double letters, interchange of two adjacent letters, addition of letters, errors involving an apostrophe, double letters instead of single letter, words having silent letter and joining of words. Techniques for correction included measures such as using of dictionary, more reading, more writing, proper pronunciation, etc. Therefore, this study bears immense importance to countries where English is used as the second language and academia in general.

Keywords: Teaching, spelling, pedagogy, writing, english

1. Introduction

Better education is very necessary for all to go ahead in the life and get success. It develops confidence and helps in building personality of a person. School education plays a great role in everyone's life. The whole education has been divided into three divisions i. e. primary education, secondary education and higher education. All the divisions of education have their own importance and benefits.

English is, almost certainly, the most important subject that a child can learn in school. In a multilingual country like India, English language is considered as an essential tool in achieving effective communication. Language is an acquired habit of systematic vocal and non-vocal activities representing meanings coming from human experiences. English language is far from the ideal writing system, as anyone with spelling difficulties is well aware. Spelling is a complex cognitive activity in which several mental processes are involved.

Learning to spell correctly is not usually easy for many people but it is very important for all those who are learning the language. According to Kuiper and Allan (2004), English language spelling seems straight forward in theory but turns out to be a little more complex in practice. They claimed that many people find spelling difficult because English language spelling does not always directly reflect the sounds people make when they say a word. Writing is a useful mode of organizing thoughts and expressing them with precision and clarity. Writing involves both auditory and visual skills and is usually taught after the learner has developed considerable efficiency in the speaking and reading skills. Writing is to be developed as a skill since it does not come spontaneously and naturally.

At the same time, spelling is important for everybody to communicate their idea. Correct pronunciation is important for conveying the right meaning of a written discourse. Bad spelling is a

hindrance for the reader to get the meaning of written language. Spelling is very important in written language, and any mistake in spelling can affect the written product and may lead to misunderstanding. Therefore, correct spelling of vocabulary is essential to convey the intended meaning. Benyo (2014) in the paper, "English spelling problems among students at the university of Dongola, Sudan" stated that overgeneralization of spelling rules is a causative factor for the spelling errors committed. Students should have a grasp of the skills of pronounciation and focus on spelling rules. Similarly, Dadzie and Lawrence (2015) in the paper, "Spelling errors among Junior High School students in the Cape Coast Metropolis" stated that among omission, addition, substitution, inversion, pronunciation and miscellaneous omission errors were committed most. Many students have difficulties in learning second language.

Esther (2015) in the paper, "Spelling errors: causes, influence on students' performance in English language essay writing and strategies for correcting them" stated that spelling is a skill requires intensive practice and efforts to be able to achieve competence in it. If appropriate measures are put in place therefore, the problem can be tackled. Othman (2018) in the paper, "An investigation of the most common spelling errors in English writing committed by English-major male students : at the university of Tabuk", stated that the major cause of the learner's spelling errors in the wrong use of vowels and pronunciations as well as mother tongue interference.

The main objectives of study are to examine different types of spelling mistakes in English among the students of Class IX of Puranigudam Girls' High School, Nagaon. Additionally, causes of spelling mistake in English among the students and their improvement after using remedial measures have been discussed.

2. Materials and method

2.1 Study area

Puranigudam Girls' high school is situated in Baruahchuk of Puranigudam of Nagaon district. This school was established in the year 1948. Later it was provincialised. It was under Rupahi block and Sutar cluster. There are eleven teachers and one non-teaching staff in the school that has 200 students.

2.2 Technique of analysis, sample selection and data collection

Experimental method is the most popular and the most widely used research method. In this study, descriptive survey method is used. With regard to sampling, the total population was 47 girls, where 25 samples were selected by using simple random sampling. Primary data has been used in the analysis collected using a questionnaire.

3. Results and discussion

3.1 Analysis of different types of spelling mistakes:

The study revealed significant and varied types of spelling mistakes. These have been indicated in Table 1.

Table 1: Types of spelling mistakes among girl students

Sl No.	Types of errors	Frequency	Percentage
1	Omission of letters	182	21.09%
2	Addition of letters	83	9.62%
3	Single letters instead of double letters	105	12.17%
4	Double letters instead of single letter	25	2.9%
5	Substitution of one letter	297	34.41%
6	Interchange of two adjacent letters	102	11.81%
7	Error involving an apostrophe	31	3.6%
8	Joining of words	13	1.5%
9	Words having silent letter	25	2.9%
	Total	**863**	**100%**

Table 1 shows that there are nine types of mistakes that are found among the students. Based on the frequency in which they occurred, substitution of letters ranked highest (297 occurrences) with 34.41%. this is followed by others in this order— omission of letters (182 occurrences) with 21.09%, single letters instead of double letters (105 occurrences) with 12.17%, interchange of two adjacent letters (102 occurrences) with 11.81%, addition of letters (83 occurrences) with 9.62%, Error involving an apostrophe (31 occurrences) with 3.6%, Double letters instead of single letter (25 occurrences) with 2.9%, Words having silent letter (25 occurrences) with 2.9%, Joining of words (13 occurrences) with 1.5%. Figure 1 pictorially represents the results.
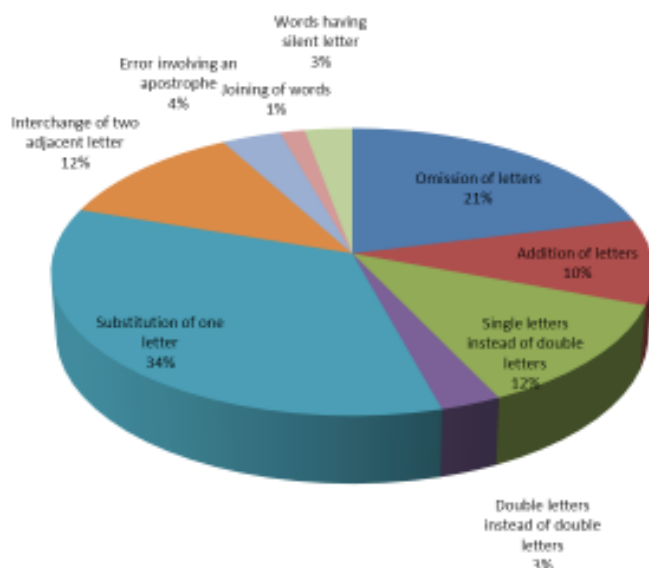

Fig. 1: Frequency of types of errors found among students

3.2 Causes of spelling mistakes in english subject

The following table depicts the causes of the different types of spelling mistakes that have been recorded using a questionnaire.

Table 2: Causes of spelling mistake

Sl. No.	Statements	Responses of 25 samples					Percentage of responses				
		SA	A	N	D	SD	SA	A	N	D	SD
1	I like English writing activity.	10	15	0	0	0	40%	60%	0%	0%	0%
2	My teacher suggests me about writing techniques and information.	12	5	8	0	0	48%	20%	32%	0%	0%
3	While writing process is being conducted in class, I am able to help friends.	10	10	4	1	0	40%	40%	16%	4%	0%
4	I often care about spelling of words when I write.	4	18	3	0	0	16%	72%	12%	0%	0%

Sl. No.	Statements	Responses of 25 samples					Percentage of responses				
		SA	A	N	D	SD	SA	A	N	D	SD
5	I often commit spelling errors.	5	12	2	4	2	20%	48%	8%	16%	8%
6	I often feel it is important to know the correct spelling of words.	5	19	1	0	0	20%	76%	4%	0%	0%
7	I often obtain less marks because of spelling errors.	5	15	2	1	2	20%	60%	8%	4%	8%
8	I often commit errors while using apostrophe.	6	15	0	4	0	24%	60%	0%	16%	0%
9	I use double letters instead of single letters.	8	14	0	2	1	32%	56%	0%	8%	4%
10	I use single letters instead of double letters.	5	14	1	4	1	20%	56%	4%	16%	4%
11	I commit errors in writing words having silent letters.	6	13	0	3	3	24%	52%	0%	12%	12%
12	I commit errors in addition of letters.	3	12	1	6	4	12%	48%	4%	24%	16%
13	I often commit errors in addition of letters.	6	14	0	1	3	24%	56%	0%	4%	12%
14	I commit errors while writing in speed.	3	21	0	0	1	12%	84%	0%	0%	4%
15	I have the desire to learn correct spelling while making errors.	7	18	0	0	0	28%	72%	0%	0%	0%

From the above table it is seen that in case of the first statement they like English writing activity, 40% students strongly agreed and 60% students agreed. 48% students strongly agreed that their teacher suggests them about writing techniques and information, 20% students agreed and 32% gave no comment. 40% students strongly agreed that while writing process is being conducted in class, they help their friends. 40% students agreed, 4% students disagreed and 16% students gave no comment.

Further, 16% students strongly agreed that they often care about spelling of words when they write.

72% agreed with it. Where, 12% gave no comment. 20% students strongly agreed that they often commit spelling errors. 48% students agreed, 16% disagreed, 8% strongly disagreed and 8% students gave no comment. 20% students strongly agreed that they often feel it is important to know the correct spelling of words. 76% agreed where 4% students gave no comment.

As much as 20% students strongly agreed that they often obtain less marks because of spelling error. 60% students agreed, 4% disagreed, 8% students strongly disagreed and 8% gave no comment.

Regarding the statement they often commit errors while using apostrophe, 24% students strongly agreed, 60% students agreed and 16% students disagreed. 32% students strongly agreed that they use double letters instead of single letter. 56% students agreed, 8% disagreed and 4% strongly disagreed. 20% students strongly agreed that they use single letter instead of double letters. 56% students agreed, 16% disagreed, 4% students strongly disagreed and 4% gave no comment. 24% students strongly agreed that they commit errors in writing words having silent letters 52% students agreed, 12% disagreed, 12% students strongly disagreed.

Finally, 12% students strongly agreed that they commit errors in addition of letters. 48% students agreed, 24% disagreed, 16% students strongly disagreed and 4% gave no comment. 24% students strongly agreed that they often commit errors by interchanging letters. 56% students agreed, 4% disagreed, 12% students strongly disagreed. 12% students strongly agreed that they commit errors while writing in speed and 84% students agreed and 4% gave no comment. 28% students strongly agreed that they have the desire to learn correct spelling while making errors and 72% students agreed it. The results have been represented in figure 2.
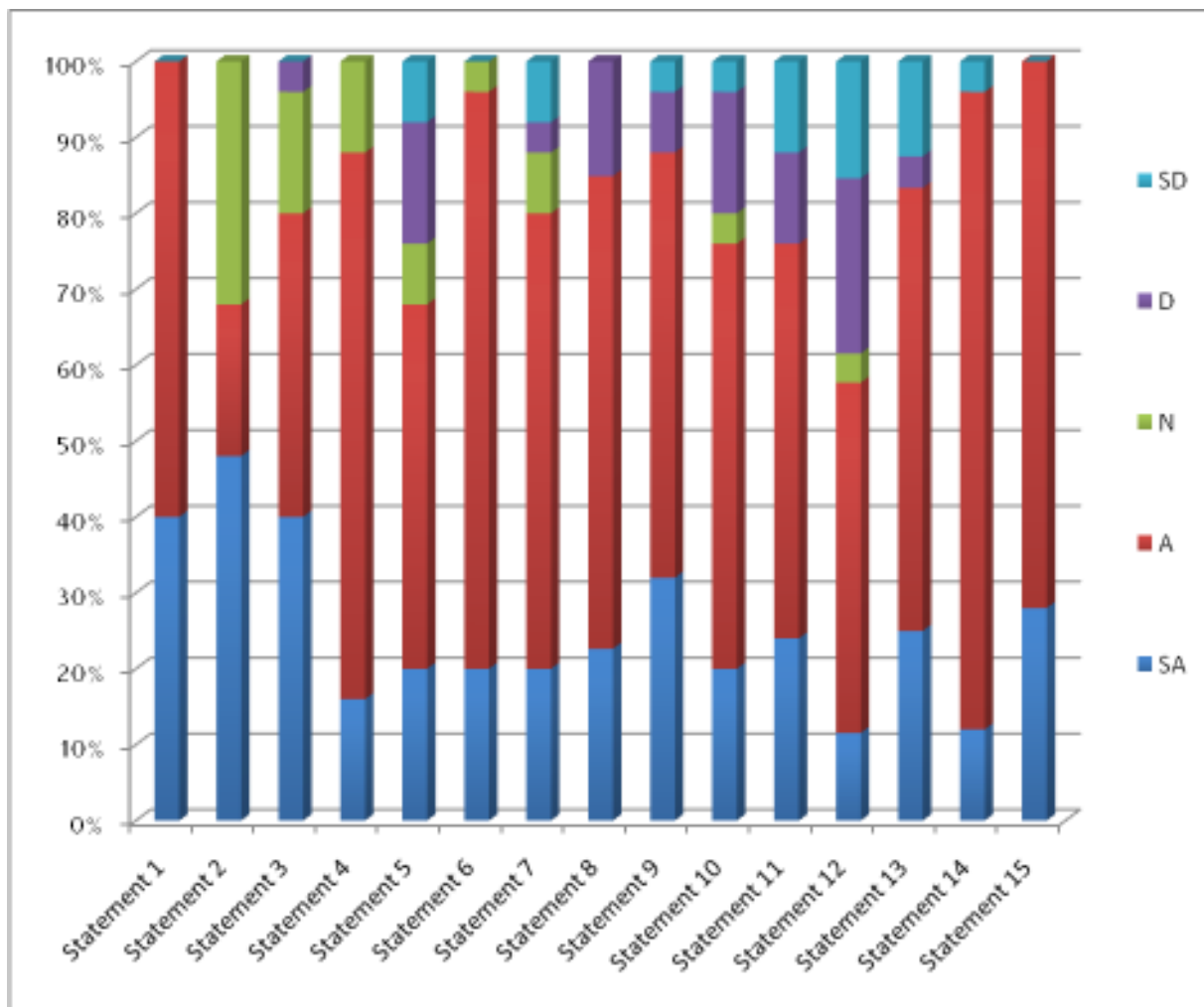

Fig. 2: Responses of samples towards causes of spelling mistake

3.3 Improvement in students regarding spelling mistakes after using remedial measures

In the present study, a spelling test of the samples was taken where different types of spelling mistakes were found among the samples. Therefore, different techniques were used to reduce spelling mistakes. Remedial measures were used for ten days regularly. After that another test of spelling of the samples was

taken. At the second test, some improvement in the spelling mistakes of the samples was observed. Following are the different techniques that were used:

1. Using dictionary: Use of dictionary is very much essential for the students to learn new words with proper spelling and meaning. The researcher taught the students how to use dictionary and learn five words per day with spelling and meaning.

2. Crosswords: Puzzles are a good way to make the brain of an individual work harder and improve the general knowledge and they are also a good way to improve the spelling. The researcher gives crossword puzzles to the students and helps them to solve these. Crosswords give a series of clues that the student must fit into overlapping horizontal and vertical boxes. If they make a mistake in spelling then the proper word would not be getting by them. It gives fun to the students. They participated in the activity and corrected some spellings.

3. Mnemonics: Memory aids or mnemonics are a useful way to remember trickier spellings. The researcher uses different techniques to help the students so that they can memorize the words easily. When it comes to memory aids, the simpler and more memorable, the better.

4. Break it down into syllables: For long words it can sometimes be helpful to break the word into syllables to help to remember the spelling. The researcher used this trick of breaking long words so that the students can learn the trick and can do accordingly for their benefit. This helps the students a lot as they can memorize different long words.

5. Word game: Word games are very necessary and helpful for the students to learn the spelling of the words. Different spoken word games and games like hangman are organized by the researcher among the samples. They showed interest in those games and improved their spellings.

6. Reading: It is the best way to reduce spelling mistakes. The researcher advised the samples to read more and more with greater attention so that they can notice and remember the correct spelling of the word.

7. Correct pronunciation: Correct pronunciation is very much necessary to correct the spelling of the word. If someone pronounces the word wrong then they may write the spelling also wrong. Therefore, the researcher teaches proper pronunciation of difficult words to the samples and helps them to remember the spellings and improve them.

8. More writing: The researcher also advised the samples to write more and more the difficult spellings. When the samples found difficult words, they were asked to write it five times. By this the samples can memorize the spelling of tough and difficult words for them.

Table 3 : Improvement of students regarding spelling mistake after using remedial measures

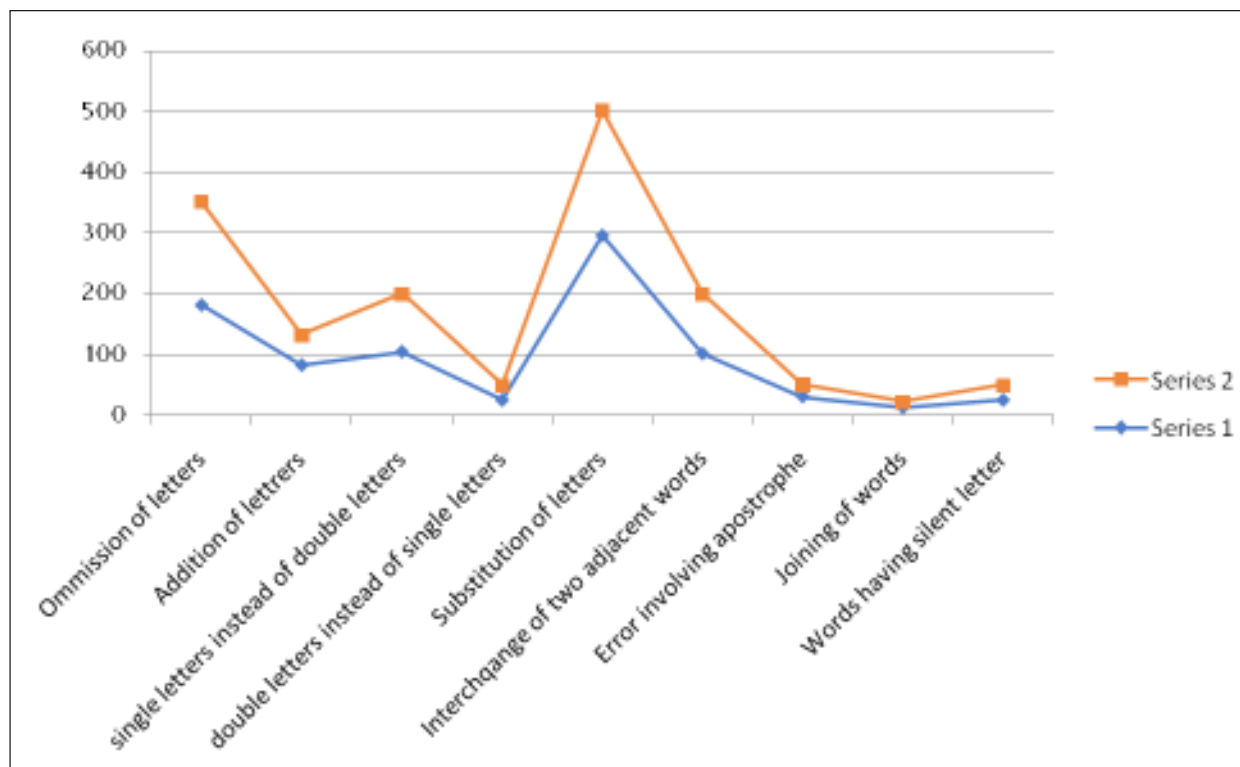| Sl No.	Types of errors	Frequency of errors in pre-test	Frequency of errors in post-test
1	Omission of letters	182	170
2	Addition of letters	83	50
3	Single letters instead of double letters	105	95
4	Double letters instead of single letter	25	25
5	Substitution of one letter	297	205
6	Interchange of two adjacent letters	102	98
7	Error involving an apostrophe	31	20
8	Joining of words	13	10
9	Words having silent letter	25	25
	TOTAL	**863**	**698**

Fig. 3: Improvement of samples regarding spelling mistakes

4.   Conclusion

This study has shown that students in the study area committed a great deal of mistakes which are identifiable and can be categorized in their spelling writing and quite a lot of reasons are responsible for this problem. This problem of spelling mistakes has also contributed in a way to their poor performance in English subject in the examination. They are facing problems in spelling more than verbal skills. The study showed the common spelling mistakes and how the teachers can solve them to improve students. It was clearly evident that almost all agreed that an important aid in helping a student is to become independent in correctly spelling and learning how to proofread his/her writing work effectively. This was true regardless of the chosen method or combination of methods used in the teaching of spelling. It is true that being able to correct one's own spelling will be the most often needed and used spelling skill both in and out of school and one of the most often used skill after one's school days are completed.

Though most language authorities recommended the teaching of proofreading for spelling errors as being desirable, there was a lack of research to substantiate their recommendations. And, although many authors of spelling texts suggested that proofreading should be encouraged, they failed to include a systematic program for the instruction of proofreading for spelling errors in their texts. Furthermore, although many teachers felt proofreading was an important part of spelling, few had initiated a systematic program of their own for the teaching of proofreading for spelling errors in written work.

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Appendix

Questionnaire on spelling mistake
Instructions : A request
Please read every question carefully before responding the purpose of this questionnaire. Please try to give appropriate responses which are applicable to you and put a tick mark to your responses taking care that no items is left out.

General information :
Name of the Student:
Name of the School:
1. I like English writing activity.

Strongly agree	Agree	No comment	Disagree	Strongly disagree

2. My teacher suggests me about writing techniques and information

Strongly agree	Agree	No comment	Disagree	Strongly disagree

3. While writing process is being conducted in class, I am able to help friends.

Strongly agree	Agree	No comment	Disagree	Strongly disagree

4. I often care about spelling of words when I write.

Strongly agree	Agree	No comment	Disagree	Strongly disagree

5. I often commit spelling errors.

Strongly agree	Agree	No comment	Disagree	Strongly disagree

6. I often feel it is important to know the correct spelling of words.

Strongly agree	Agree	No comment	Disagree	Strongly disagree

7. I often obtain less marks because of spelling errors.

Strongly agree	Agree	No comment	Disagree	Strongly disagree

8. I often commit errors while using apostrophe.

Strongly agree	Agree	No comment	Disagree	Strongly disagree

9. I use double letters instead of single letters.

Strongly agree	Agree	No comment	Disagree	Strongly disagree

10. I use single letters instead of double letters.

Strongly agree	Agree	No comment	Disagree	Strongly disagree
.				

11. I commit errors in writing words having silent letters

Strongly agree	Agree	No comment	Disagree	Strongly disagree

12. I commit errors in addition of letters.

Strongly agree	Agree	No comment	Disagree	Strongly disagree

13. I often commit errors in addition of letters.

Strongly agree	Agree	No comment	Disagree	Strongly disagree

14. I commit errors while writing in speed.

Strongly agree	Agree	No comment	Disagree	Strongly disagree

15. I have the desire to learn correct spelling while making errors.

Strongly agree	Agree	No comment	Disagree	Strongly disagree

A questionnaire with a list of words for dictation

For pre-test

1) Accommodation	11) Eighteen	21) Businessman	31) Psychology
2) Handkerchief	12) Everyone	22) Conscious	32) Paid
3) Rhythm	13) Occurred	23) Throughout	33) Island
4) Embarrass	14) Almighty	24) Dependent	34) Beautiful
5) Millennium	15) Losing	25) Pollution	35) Beginning
6) Maintenance	16) Lives	26) Whether	36) Technology
7) Pronunciation	17) Consequently	27) Children's day	37) Knowledge
8) Completely	18) Engineering	28) People	38) Administration
9) Mechanism	19) Conceived	29) Enterprise	39) Piece
10) Develop	20) Girls' school	30) Represent	40) Disease

List of words for post-test

1. Responsibility	15. Fulfill	29. Belief
2. Apparent	16. Grammar	30. Women's
3. Dependable	17. Government	31. Psychology
4. Importance	18. Acquire	32. Occasion
5. Occurrence	19. Aggressive	33. Parliament
6. Beneficial	20. Handkerchief	34. Committee
7. Accept	21. Pronunciation	35. Collaborate
8. Discreet	22. Privilege	36. Reward
9. Adverse	23. Affect	37. Difficult
10. Imminent	24. It's	38. Guardian
11. Ensure	25. Laboratory	39. Pronunciation
12. Illusion	26. Leisure	40. Write
13. Climatic	27. Accommodation	
14. Acknowledge	28. Administration	