

Enhancing English Punctuation Skills through Editing Exercises: An Action Research Study among Grade VIII Students in Karnataka India

Shree Manjappa Ramappa Koteppanavar¹, Kumari Kaveri Nagappa Kotihal²

¹*English Teacher, Karnataka Public School, Aremallapur.*

²*Teacher Trainee, Shri Kumareshwara College of Education, Hangal.*

Abstract—The correct use of punctuation is an essential component of English writing, contributing significantly to clarity, coherence, and effective communication. However, many secondary school students experience difficulties in applying punctuation rules accurately, resulting in grammatical errors and reduced writing quality. The present action research aimed to investigate the effectiveness of editing exercises in improving punctuation skills among Grade VIII students at Karnataka Public School, Aremallapur, Karnataka, India. A classroom-based action research design was adopted involving fifteen students who demonstrated persistent difficulties in the use of punctuation marks. Baseline data were collected through a pre-test, classroom observations, and analysis of students' written work. A structured intervention comprising regular editing exercises, guided correction activities, and teacher feedback was implemented over several weeks to strengthen students' understanding and application of punctuation rules. Following the intervention, a post-test was administered to evaluate students' learning outcomes. Descriptive statistical techniques, including mean, median, mode, standard deviation, and quartile deviation, were employed to analyse students' performance. The findings revealed substantial improvement in punctuation accuracy, with the mean score increasing from 4.20 in the pre-test to 15.53 in the post-test. Students demonstrated enhanced ability to identify and correct punctuation errors independently, improved proofreading skills, greater confidence in English writing, and increased participation in classroom learning activities. The study concludes that editing exercises represent an effective learner-centred instructional strategy for enhancing punctuation skills and overall writing proficiency among secondary school students. The findings have practical implications for English language teachers seeking to improve writing instruction through activity-based and formative assessment approaches. Future studies involving larger

samples and diverse educational settings are recommended to strengthen the generalisability of these findings.

Index Terms—Action research; English language teaching; Editing exercises; Punctuation skills; Writing proficiency; Secondary education; Formative assessment.

I. INTRODUCTION

Effective written communication is a fundamental objective of English language education and plays a vital role in academic achievement, professional development, and everyday communication. Among the four core language skills—listening, speaking, reading, and writing—writing is considered one of the most complex because it requires learners to integrate grammatical knowledge, vocabulary, organization, spelling, and punctuation to communicate ideas accurately and coherently. In the context of English as a second language (ESL), the development of writing proficiency is particularly challenging, as learners must simultaneously acquire linguistic accuracy and communicative competence.

Punctuation is an essential component of written language that contributes significantly to the clarity, coherence, and readability of a text. Correct punctuation enables readers to interpret meaning accurately by indicating pauses, sentence boundaries, emphasis, quotations, possession, and relationships between ideas. The appropriate use of punctuation marks—including full stops, commas, question marks, exclamation marks, quotation marks, apostrophes, colons, semicolons, and capitalization—supports effective communication and reduces ambiguity.

Conversely, incorrect or inconsistent punctuation can alter the intended meaning of a sentence, create confusion for readers, and diminish the overall quality of written communication.

In Indian secondary schools, English functions as an important language of instruction and serves as a gateway to higher education and employment opportunities. Consequently, improving students' writing accuracy is a significant educational priority. Classroom observations conducted by the researchers revealed that many Grade VIII students experienced persistent difficulties in using punctuation marks correctly during written assignments, classwork, and examinations. Frequent punctuation errors affected the clarity, grammatical accuracy, and presentation of students' written responses. Furthermore, many learners lacked the ability to identify and correct their own mistakes, indicating inadequate development of self-editing and proofreading skills.

Educational research has consistently emphasized that writing proficiency develops through continuous practice, constructive feedback, and active learner engagement rather than through memorization of grammatical rules alone. One instructional strategy that has demonstrated considerable potential in improving writing accuracy is the use of editing exercises. Editing activities require students to identify, analyse, and correct errors in sentences and paragraphs, thereby encouraging reflective thinking, grammatical awareness, and independent learning. Such learner-centred approaches enable students to recognize common writing errors, understand the underlying rules governing punctuation, and gradually internalize correct writing conventions.

Action research provides an appropriate methodological framework for addressing classroom-based learning problems because it enables teachers to identify specific educational challenges, implement targeted interventions, systematically evaluate outcomes, and improve instructional practices. By integrating planning, implementation, observation, reflection, and revision, action research contributes directly to professional development while simultaneously enhancing student learning. Within the context of English language teaching, action research allows teachers to investigate practical instructional strategies that respond to the immediate needs of learners.

The present study employed an action research design to examine the effectiveness of editing exercises in improving punctuation skills among Grade VIII students of Karnataka Public School, Aremallapur, Karnataka, India. The intervention focused on providing systematic editing practice, guided correction exercises, classroom discussions, and constructive teacher feedback over a structured instructional period. Students' performance was assessed through pre-test and post-test measures, and descriptive statistical techniques were used to evaluate learning outcomes.

The findings of this study are expected to contribute to the growing body of classroom-based research on English language teaching by demonstrating the effectiveness of editing exercises as an instructional strategy for improving punctuation accuracy. The study also provides practical guidance for English teachers, curriculum developers, teacher educators, and educational administrators seeking evidence-based approaches to strengthen writing instruction in secondary schools. By promoting learner autonomy, self-editing skills, and reflective writing practices, the intervention supports broader educational goals related to language proficiency, academic achievement, and lifelong communication skills.

Overall, this research highlights the importance of integrating structured editing activities into regular English language instruction to improve punctuation competence and writing quality among secondary school learners. The results may serve as a useful reference for future action research studies investigating effective pedagogical strategies for enhancing writing skills across diverse educational contexts.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The development of writing proficiency has long been recognized as a central objective of English language education. Writing is a multifaceted cognitive process requiring learners to integrate grammatical competence, vocabulary, organization, punctuation, spelling, and critical thinking. Among these components, punctuation serves as a fundamental mechanism for organizing written discourse and ensuring that meaning is communicated accurately. Consequently, researchers have increasingly emphasized the importance of instructional

approaches that improve punctuation accuracy and overall writing quality.

Research in second language acquisition indicates that punctuation is often overlooked in classroom instruction despite its significant role in written communication. Many learners acquire grammatical knowledge but continue to experience difficulties in applying punctuation rules consistently in authentic writing tasks. Such deficiencies reduce the clarity, coherence, and readability of written texts and frequently affect students' academic performance.

According to Wren and Martin (2018), punctuation marks function as the structural framework of written language by guiding readers through sentence organization and meaning. Their work emphasizes that effective writing depends not only on grammatical correctness but also on the accurate application of punctuation conventions. They further argue that regular practice and corrective feedback are essential for developing long-term writing accuracy.

Educational psychologists have consistently highlighted the importance of active learning in language development. Aggarwal (2010) explains that meaningful learning occurs when students actively participate in identifying, analysing, and correcting their own mistakes rather than merely memorizing grammatical rules. Learner-centred instructional strategies encourage deeper cognitive processing, improve retention, and develop independent learning habits. Editing exercises exemplify this approach by requiring students to recognize language errors and apply grammatical knowledge in practical contexts.

Similarly, Best and Kahn (2006) emphasize that classroom-based interventions should be evidence-driven and evaluated through systematic research. They advocate the use of action research to address immediate classroom problems because it enables teachers to implement instructional innovations, assess their effectiveness, and modify teaching practices based on empirical findings. Action research has therefore become an important methodological approach in educational improvement initiatives, particularly within language classrooms.

The principles of action research proposed by Kothari (2004) further support the present investigation. Kothari argues that educational research should not only generate theoretical knowledge but also solve practical instructional problems. Classroom-based research involving planning, implementation,

observation, and reflection enables teachers to identify learner difficulties and develop effective pedagogical interventions tailored to local educational contexts.

The National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT, 2023) places considerable emphasis on the development of communicative competence through activity-based language learning. The English curriculum encourages teachers to integrate reading, writing, editing, peer assessment, and reflective learning into classroom instruction. Such recommendations recognize that writing proficiency develops through continuous practice rather than isolated grammar instruction. Editing activities are therefore consistent with competency-based education and constructivist approaches promoted in contemporary school curricula.

Several studies have reported that teacher feedback significantly enhances students' ability to identify punctuation errors and improve writing accuracy. Constructive feedback encourages learners to reflect on their mistakes, understand underlying grammatical principles, and gradually become independent editors of their own work. Moreover, peer-editing activities create collaborative learning environments in which students discuss alternative corrections and develop greater awareness of language conventions.

Although previous research has established the importance of writing instruction and formative assessment, relatively few classroom action research studies have specifically examined the effectiveness of structured editing exercises for improving punctuation skills among Grade VIII students in government schools in Karnataka. Existing studies often focus broadly on grammar achievement or overall writing performance without isolating punctuation as a distinct learning outcome. Furthermore, limited research has investigated editing exercises within authentic classroom settings using systematic pre-test and post-test evaluation.

The present study seeks to address this gap by investigating the effectiveness of editing exercises as an instructional intervention for improving punctuation skills among Grade VIII students in Karnataka Public School, Aremallapur. By adopting an action research framework, the study contributes practical evidence regarding the role of learner-centred editing activities in enhancing writing accuracy, proofreading skills, and learner confidence. The findings are expected to provide valuable insights

for English language teachers, teacher educators, curriculum planners, and educational researchers seeking effective strategies for improving writing instruction in secondary schools.

III. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The present action research was conducted to evaluate the effectiveness of editing exercises in enhancing punctuation skills among Grade VIII students. The specific objectives were:

1. To assess the existing level of punctuation skills among Grade VIII students through a pre-test.
2. To identify the common punctuation errors committed by students in English writing.
3. To design and implement structured editing exercises as a classroom intervention to improve punctuation skills.
4. To develop students' ability to identify, analyse, and correct punctuation errors independently.
5. To compare students' achievement in punctuation before and after the intervention using pre-test and post-test scores.
6. To determine the effectiveness of editing exercises in improving punctuation accuracy, proofreading skills, and writing quality.
7. To promote learner confidence and self-editing habits in English writing.
8. To provide practical recommendations for integrating editing exercises into English language teaching at the secondary school level.

IV. RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

Null Hypothesis (H₀)

There is no statistically significant difference between the mean pre-test and post-test scores of Grade VIII students after the implementation of editing exercises for improving punctuation skills.

Alternative Hypothesis (H₁)

There is a statistically significant improvement in the mean post-test scores of Grade VIII students after the implementation of editing exercises for improving punctuation skills.

V. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

5.1 Research Design

The present investigation employed a Classroom Action Research design. Action research was selected

because it enables teachers to identify classroom learning problems, implement appropriate pedagogical interventions, observe their effectiveness, and reflect upon instructional practices for continuous improvement. The study followed the cyclical stages of planning, action, observation, and reflection, ensuring systematic implementation of the intervention.

5.2 Research Approach

The study adopted a quantitative approach supported by qualitative classroom observations. Quantitative data were obtained through pre-test and post-test assessments, while qualitative evidence was collected through classroom observations, students' written work, and teacher reflections to gain a comprehensive understanding of students' learning progress.

5.3 Research Method

The study used the pre-test–intervention–post-test method. Initially, students' punctuation skills were assessed through a diagnostic pre-test. Following the pre-test, structured editing exercises were implemented over a planned instructional period. After completing the intervention, students' learning outcomes were measured using a post-test.

5.4 Locale of the Study

The research was conducted at Karnataka Public School, Aremallapur, Karnataka, India, during the regular English language classroom sessions.

5.5 Population

The population of the study consisted of all Grade VIII students enrolled at Karnataka Public School, Aremallapur.

5.6 Sample and Sampling Technique

A purposive sampling technique was employed to select 15 Grade VIII students who demonstrated persistent difficulties in using punctuation marks correctly in English writing. These students were identified based on classroom performance, written assignments, and diagnostic assessment.

5.7 Research Variables

Independent Variable

- Editing Exercises

Dependent Variables

- Punctuation skills
- Writing accuracy
- Proofreading ability
- Self-editing skills

5.8 Research Instruments

The following research instruments were used for data collection:

- Diagnostic Pre-test
- Achievement Post-test
- Editing Exercise Worksheets
- Classroom Observation Schedule
- Students' Written Assignments
- Teacher Observation Diary

5.9 Intervention Procedure

The intervention was implemented systematically over several instructional sessions.

The procedure included:

- Administration of a diagnostic pre-test.
- Identification of common punctuation errors.
- Preparation of editing worksheets based on students' learning needs.
- Teacher demonstration of correct punctuation usage.
- Guided editing activities using sentences and short paragraphs.
- Individual and peer-editing exercises.
- Continuous teacher feedback and corrective instruction.
- Classroom discussions on common errors.
- Independent editing practice.
- Administration of a post-test to evaluate learning outcomes.

5.10 Data Collection Procedure

Data were collected in three phases:

Phase I – Baseline Assessment

Students completed a pre-test to determine their existing level of punctuation proficiency.

Phase II – Intervention

Editing exercises were conducted regularly using worksheets, collaborative activities, guided correction, and teacher feedback to improve punctuation skills.

Phase III – Post-intervention Assessment

A post-test identical in difficulty level to the pre-test was administered to measure learning gains following the intervention.

5.11 Data Analysis

The collected data were analysed using descriptive statistical techniques, including:

- Frequency Distribution
- Percentage Analysis
- Mean
- Median
- Mode
- Standard Deviation
- Quartile Deviation

5.12 Ethical Considerations

The study was conducted in accordance with accepted ethical standards for educational research.

- Permission to conduct the study was obtained from the Headmaster of Karnataka Public School, Aremallapur.
- Students participated voluntarily in the classroom intervention.
- The confidentiality and anonymity of participants were maintained throughout the research process.
- Data were used solely for academic and research purposes.
- The intervention posed no physical, psychological, or academic risk to the participants.

VI. RESULTS

6.1 Pre-test Performance

The pre-test was conducted to determine the baseline level of students' punctuation skills before the implementation of the intervention. The results indicated that most participants demonstrated limited knowledge of punctuation rules and experienced difficulty in applying punctuation marks correctly in sentence construction and paragraph writing. The descriptive statistics revealed a mean score of 4.20, indicating poor initial achievement. The low scores reflected frequent errors involving full stops, commas, capitalization, apostrophes, and question marks.

6.2 Post-test Performance

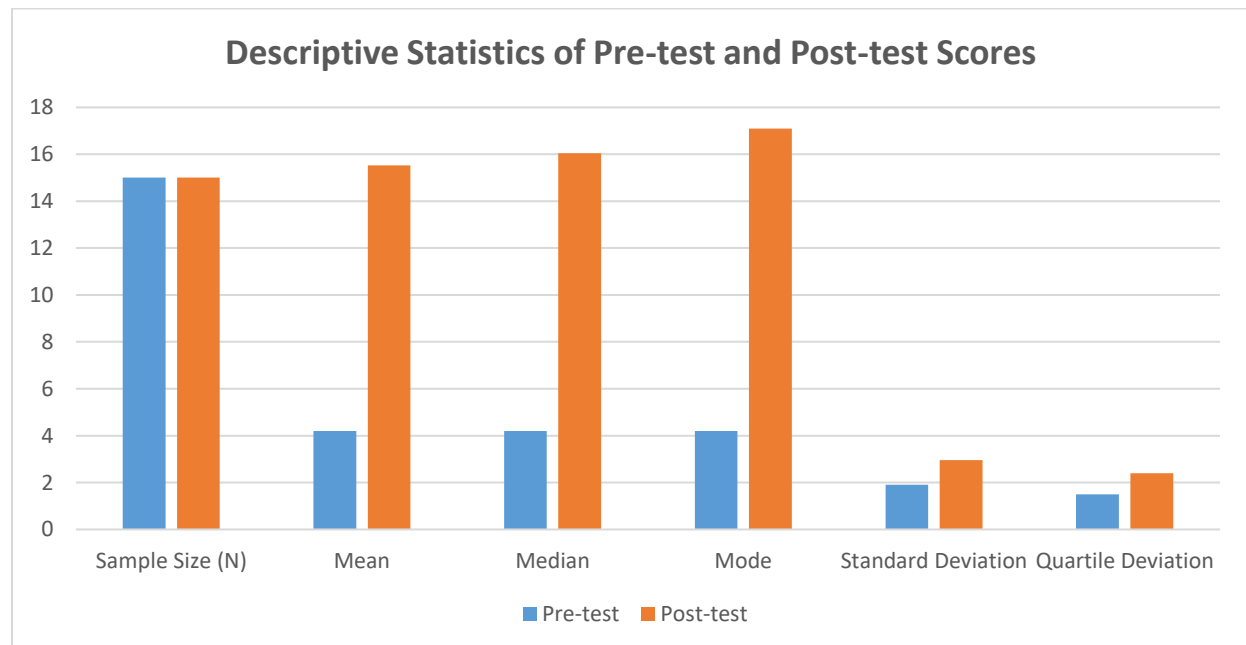
Following the implementation of structured editing exercises, a post-test was administered to evaluate students' learning outcomes. The results showed a substantial improvement in punctuation skills. Students demonstrated greater accuracy in identifying and correcting punctuation errors, improved sentence construction, and increased confidence in proofreading their written work. The post-test mean increased to 15.53, representing a marked improvement over the pre-test performance.

6.3 Comparative Analysis

A comparison of pre-test and post-test scores indicates that the editing exercises produced a positive effect on students' punctuation proficiency.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Pre-test and Post-test Scores

Statistic	Pre-test	Post-test
Sample Size (N)	15	15
Mean	4.20	15.53
Median	4.20	16.05
Mode	4.20	17.09
Standard Deviation	1.90	2.96
Quartile Deviation	1.50	2.40



The mean score increased by 11.33 marks, indicating considerable improvement in punctuation performance following the intervention. Although the post-test standard deviation was higher than the pre-test value, this reflected wider variation among higher-achieving students rather than reduced effectiveness. Overall, the descriptive statistics support the conclusion that editing exercises contributed positively to students' learning outcomes.

VII. STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

Descriptive statistical techniques were employed to analyse students' performance before and after the intervention.

The pre-test yielded a mean score of 4.20, whereas the post-test mean increased to 15.53, representing an improvement of 11.33 marks. Median values increased from 4.20 to 16.05, while the mode increased from 4.20 to 17.09. These measures

consistently indicate substantial improvement in students' punctuation skills.

The standard deviation increased from 1.90 to 2.96, suggesting that while overall achievement improved significantly, individual differences remained among students at the conclusion of the intervention. Quartile deviation also increased from 1.50 to 2.40, reflecting broader score dispersion within the higher performance range.

Overall, the descriptive statistical evidence demonstrates that structured editing exercises were effective in improving students' punctuation accuracy and writing performance.

VIII. DISCUSSION

The findings of the present study indicate that structured editing exercises significantly enhanced punctuation skills among Grade VIII students. Comparison of pre-test and post-test results revealed substantial improvement in writing accuracy, suggesting that regular editing practice contributed positively to students' learning.

The improvement observed in the post-test supports learner-centred instructional approaches that emphasize active participation, reflection, and immediate corrective feedback. Editing exercises encouraged students to analyse their own writing, identify punctuation errors, and apply grammatical rules independently. Such activities strengthened proofreading skills and promoted greater confidence in written communication.

The findings are consistent with Aggarwal (2010), who emphasized that active learning strategies improve retention and understanding through learner participation. Similarly, Best and Kahn (2006) argued that classroom interventions evaluated through action research can produce meaningful improvements in educational practice. The results also support the recommendations of NCERT (2023), which advocates activity-based language teaching and continuous formative assessment to improve writing proficiency. The study further aligns with constructivist principles of language learning, where students develop knowledge through meaningful engagement with authentic learning tasks. Rather than memorizing punctuation rules in isolation, learners actively applied those rules in editing contexts, leading to improved transfer of learning to independent writing tasks.

Although the study was conducted with a relatively small sample, the consistent improvement across descriptive statistical indicators demonstrates the educational value of editing exercises as an instructional strategy. The findings provide practical evidence supporting the integration of editing activities into regular English language teaching at the secondary school level.

IX. EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

The findings of the study have several implications for English language education.

- English teachers should integrate structured editing exercises into regular classroom instruction to improve punctuation accuracy.
- Activity-based learning strategies should complement conventional grammar teaching.
- Schools should encourage formative assessment practices that provide regular corrective feedback.
- Teacher education programmes should include practical training in editing-based instructional strategies.
- Curriculum developers should incorporate editing and proofreading activities into English language textbooks and workbooks.
- Students should be encouraged to engage in self-editing and peer-editing to strengthen independent learning.
- Educational administrators should provide professional development programmes focusing on effective writing instruction.
- Digital learning resources and interactive editing tools may further enhance students' writing proficiency.

X. CONCLUSION

The present action research investigated the effectiveness of editing exercises in improving punctuation skills among Grade VIII students of Karnataka Public School, Aremallapur. The comparison of pre-test and post-test scores demonstrated a substantial improvement in students' punctuation accuracy and overall writing performance following the intervention.

The findings indicate that editing exercises provide an effective learner-centred instructional strategy for

developing punctuation competence, proofreading ability, and writing confidence. Students became more capable of identifying and correcting punctuation errors independently, resulting in clearer and more accurate written communication.

The study demonstrates that systematic editing practice, combined with continuous teacher guidance and constructive feedback, can significantly improve English writing skills at the secondary school level. Integrating editing exercises into routine classroom teaching has the potential to enhance both language proficiency and academic achievement.

XI. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study was subject to the following limitations:

1. The study involved only 15 Grade VIII students, limiting the generalisability of the findings.
2. The research was conducted in a single government school.
3. The intervention focused exclusively on punctuation skills.
4. The duration of the intervention was relatively short.
5. Only descriptive statistical techniques were reported in the original study.
6. Long-term retention of learning was not assessed.
7. The study did not compare editing exercises with alternative instructional methods.

XII. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. Editing exercises should become a regular component of English language instruction.
2. Teachers should provide continuous formative feedback on students' written work.
3. Schools should organize writing workshops emphasizing punctuation and proofreading.
4. Digital editing platforms and educational technology should be incorporated into writing instruction.
5. Similar studies should be conducted with larger and more diverse samples.
6. Future research should employ inferential statistical techniques, including paired-samples *t*-tests and effect size analysis.

7. Longitudinal studies should examine the long-term retention of punctuation skills.

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