



Identifying And Correcting Homophone Errors in English Among Secondary School Students: An Action Research

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ABSTRACT

Using homophones accurately is essential for clarity in written communication; however, secondary school students often struggle to differentiate between words that share the same pronunciation but differ in spelling and meaning. This confusion often leads to errors in classwork, examinations, and everyday writing tasks. This study of action research aimed to find out the extent of homophone differentiation confusion among secondary school students and to implement appropriate strategies to address the problem. The strategies applied involved activity-based and learner-centred activities such as flashcards, video-based learning, emoji homophone clues, crossword bingo, and a magic homophone box to strengthen contextual understanding and retention. Pre-test and Post-test were conducted to collect data along with systematic classroom observation. The results were compared, and the analysis indicated considerable improvement in students' ability to recognise and differentiate homophones in meaningful contexts. The findings of the study proved that interactive teaching strategies can enhance writing accuracy by reducing homophone related errors among secondary learners.

Keywords: Homophone Proficiency, Language Accuracy, Activity-Based Learning, Action Research.

Received 02 July, 2026; Revised 08 July, 2026; Accepted 12 July, 2026 © The author(s) 2026.
Published with open access at www.questjournals.org

I. INTRODUCTION

Education is widely recognized as the most powerful tool for transforming both individuals and society. As Nelson Mandela famously stated, "Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world." This idea reflects the deeper purpose of education—not merely the acquisition of knowledge, but the development of critical thinking, values, skills, and the ability to participate meaningfully in a rapidly evolving world. Education nurtures intellectual curiosity, builds character, and empowers learners to understand themselves and their surroundings. It prepares individuals to face challenges with confidence, communicate effectively, and contribute to social progress. In the process of language learning, the accurate use of words plays a crucial role in effective communication. According to Halliday (1978), language derives meaning from the context in which it is used. Therefore, students must not only learn the pronunciation of words but also understand their meanings and appropriate usage in different contexts. However, many learners experience difficulty in distinguishing homophones, which often results in errors in written communication.

Action research is a reflective, systematic, and participatory process through which practitioners, especially teachers, study their own practice with the aim of bringing about positive and meaningful change in their professional environment. It serves as a bridge between theory and practice, enabling educators to identify real, practical problems in their classrooms, experiment with new strategies, and evaluate the results to improve learning outcomes. Corey (1953) viewed action research as a process through which practitioners systematically study their own practices in order to improve them. Unlike traditional research, which often separates the researcher from the subject, action research involves the practitioner directly as both participant and investigator, making it deeply personal, contextual, and transformative.

In this Action Research, interactive and activity-based strategies were employed to address the problem of homophone confusion among secondary school students. A variety of classroom techniques were introduced to make the learning process engaging and meaningful. These included the use of flashcards with homophone pairs to help students recognize similar-sounding words, video-based lessons to connect pronunciation with

meaning, and emoji-based clue cards to strengthen visual association and memory. In addition, activities such as homophone crossword puzzles and a specially designed homophone box were used to encourage active participation and contextual application of homophones. These strategies aimed to create a more dynamic and student-centered learning environment where students could practice identifying and using homophones with greater confidence. The study seeks to examine how such interactive approaches contribute to improving students' understanding and correct usage of homophones in written English. The outcomes of the research are expected to highlight the effectiveness of activity-based instruction in reducing homophone errors and enhancing overall language accuracy in secondary classrooms.

NEED AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

English occupies a central position in the modern world as a global language of communication, education, science, technology, and professional interaction. In the Indian educational context, English functions as both a subject of study and a medium of instruction at various levels of schooling. For students to achieve proficiency in English, they must develop a strong command of vocabulary, spelling accuracy, grammatical correctness, and contextual understanding. Among these essential language skills, the correct use of Homophones poses a persistent and often underestimated challenge for learners. Homophones are words that share the same pronunciation but differ in spelling and meaning, and this unique characteristic makes them a frequent source of confusion in both spoken and written English.

The need for the present study arises from the observation that students commonly misuse Homophones in their written work, leading to spelling errors, incorrect sentence construction, and miscommunication of meaning. Errors involving Homophones such as their–there–they're, write–right, hear–here, pair–pear, and advice–advise are repeatedly found in students' notebooks, examinations, and classroom assignments. These errors not only affect the accuracy of language but also reflect a lack of contextual comprehension and vocabulary awareness. When learners rely solely on pronunciation rather than meaning, they fail to recognize the functional differences between words, resulting in confusion and reduced clarity in communication. According to Crystal (2003), effective language learning requires the development of both linguistic knowledge and communicative competence, highlighting the importance of understanding words within their appropriate contexts.

Homophone Confusion becomes particularly problematic in written English, where pronunciation cues are absent and meaning must be derived entirely from context. In academic writing, even a minor Homophone error can alter the intended meaning of a sentence and negatively impact the reader's understanding. For school students, such mistakes often lead to loss of marks in examinations and lowered confidence in language use. In competitive and standardized examinations, where accuracy and precision are crucial, Homophone errors can significantly affect overall performance. Therefore, addressing this issue is essential for improving students' academic achievement and linguistic competence.

Furthermore, the study supports the use of innovative and activity-based teaching strategies to address Homophone Confusion. Techniques such as fill-in-the-blank exercises, matching activities, multiple-choice questions, odd-one-out tasks, sentence construction, and contextual drills encourage active learner participation and deeper engagement with language. When students interact with Homophones in varied formats, they are more likely to understand subtle differences in meaning and retain the correct usage. The integration of visual aids, real-life examples, and classroom discussions further strengthens comprehension and reduces the likelihood of repeated errors. Ultimately, the study contributes to making English language learning more meaningful, accurate, and effective. Vygotsky (1978) emphasized that learning is enhanced through active participation and meaningful social interaction, supporting the use of interactive classroom activities to strengthen language acquisition and understanding.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To identify the common homophone-related difficulties faced by Students and analyze the reasons behind these confusions.
2. To develop and implement appropriate strategies and interventions for Students correctly recognize, differentiate, and use Homophone pairs.
3. To improve students' accuracy in selecting the correct Homophone based on meaning and context.

ACTION HYPOTHESIS

In this study, the action hypothesis states: "The plan of action will enhance students' understanding of homophones, improving their accuracy in identifying, differentiating, and using Homophone pairs correctly in meaningful contexts."

METHODOLOGY IN BRIEF

The Action Research was conducted among Class VIII students of CBM Higher Secondary School, Nooranad to address their difficulties in identifying and using Homophones correctly. A Pre-Test was administered to identify students who struggled with Homophones, including their ability to recognise homophone pairs, understand their meanings, and apply them appropriately in context. The test designed to evaluate homophone proficiency—both Pre-Test and Post-Test—included multiple choice and contextual questions. Out of 40 students, 11 were identified as the sample group based on their low performance. These students demonstrated significant difficulty in distinguishing homophone pairs due to similarities in pronunciation, limited vocabulary exposure, and lack of contextual understanding.

A plan of action was developed to address these challenges by incorporating interactive and student-centered strategies such as Flashcards, Video-Based Learning, Emoji Homophone Clue Activity, Crossword Bingo, and the Homophone Box. These strategies were implemented over five days using various teaching aids including flashcards, PowerPoint presentations, worksheets, word cards, pictures, and whiteboard demonstrations. The activities were designed to enhance students' understanding of homophone meanings, improve spelling accuracy, and encourage the correct usage of homophones in sentences.

A Post-Test using the same set of questions as the Pre-Test was conducted to evaluate the effectiveness of the intervention. The data were analyzed using percentage analysis to compare students' performance before and after the teaching strategies were implemented. The results indicated a significant improvement in students' ability to recognize and use Homophones correctly, demonstrating that the interactive strategies and contextual learning activities were effective in reducing homophone confusion and enhancing students' confidence in English language usage.

II. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION OF THE STUDY

The investigator observed that students were facing difficulties in identifying and correctly using Homophones, particularly in distinguishing between words that have the same pronunciation but different meanings and spellings. To diagnose the key problem areas, a Pre-Test was conducted. Following the implementation of a targeted Action Plan aimed at reducing Homophone Confusion through various interactive strategies, a Post-Test was administered. A comparative analysis of the results from the Pre-Test and Post-Test was carried out to evaluate the effectiveness of the action plan and to identify the improvement in students' ability to recognize and apply Homophones correctly in context.

Table 1
Comparison of Percentage of Pre-Test and Post-Test

SI No	Name	Percentage of pre-Test scores	Percentage of post-Test scores
1	Abhinav Ratheesh	28%	84%
2	Abhirami J	24%	88%
3	Goutham D	32%	84%
4	Devamithra K	28%	76%
5	Hani Krishna S	24%	76%
6	Anamika S	36%	72%
7	Dhanalekshmi	28%	72%
8	Anusree Ajith	36%	76%
9	Uthraja R	32%	80%
10	Sivapriya	36%	72%
11	Navaneetha S	32%	80%

Upon comparing the percentage of marks obtained in the Pre-Test and Post-Test, as presented in the table, it was observed that there was a significant improvement in students' understanding and usage of Homophones. The analysis revealed that all 11 students demonstrated a marked increase in their scores after the implementation of the action plan. While the Pre-Test scores ranged between 24% and 36%, the Post-Test scores increased notably, ranging from 72% to 88%. These results indicate that the action plan was effective in improving students' ability to recognize and apply Homophones correctly in context. Continuous practice and reinforcement may further help students strengthen their understanding and maintain this improvement.

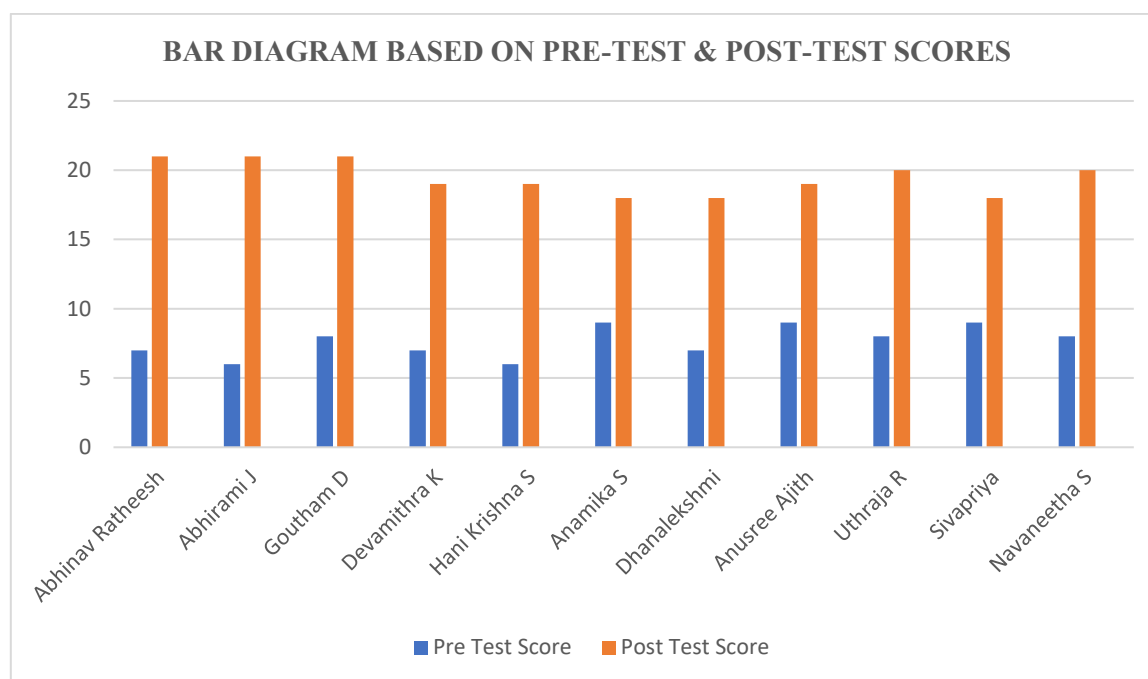


Figure 1: Comparison of Pre-Test and Post-Test

A bar diagram is constructed as part of this study based on the marks obtained by the Class VIII students in the Pre-Test and Post-Test. The names of the 11 students are listed along the x-axis, while the marks scored are represented along the y-axis. The blue bars indicate the scores obtained by the students during the Pre-Test, whereas the orange bars represent the scores obtained in the Post-Test. The graph clearly illustrates the improvement in students' performance after the implementation of the action plan, showing a noticeable increase in scores and demonstrating the effectiveness of the teaching strategies used to reduce Homophone Confusion.

EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

1. This study will assist teachers in identifying the specific difficulties students face in distinguishing and using homophones correctly, enabling them to provide focused instruction to address these errors effectively.
2. The findings of this research can help teachers adopt activity-based and interactive teaching strategies, which enhance student engagement and improve their understanding of confusing word pairs in English.
3. By emphasizing homophone proficiency, the study highlights the importance of contextual learning in language development, thereby improving students' writing accuracy, confidence, and overall interest in learning English.

III. CONCLUSION

English is a core subject that requires a strong foundation in essential language skills, as reading, writing, and communication are closely interconnected. Among the various aspects of language learning, the correct use of homophones often poses challenges for secondary school students because words with similar pronunciation may have different spellings and meanings. This confusion frequently leads to errors in writing and affects the clarity and accuracy of students' expression. To address this issue, a structured action plan was implemented using interactive and activity-based strategies such as flashcards, video-based learning, visual clue cards, crossword activities, and the homophone box. These interventions helped students better understand the differences between commonly confused homophone pairs and apply them correctly in context. As a result, students showed greater confidence and improvement in their written language. The study demonstrates that action research is an effective approach for identifying classroom language difficulties and implementing practical solutions, and that well-planned, engaging instructional strategies can significantly improve students' homophone proficiency and overall language accuracy.

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