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Case Study

Influence of L1 Interference (Tamil) on SJKT Students' Use of English Grammar in Writing: A Case Study

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ABSTRACT

Tamil medium (SJKT) pupils often experience difficulties in English writing due to structural differences between Tamil and English in multilingual Malaysia. This study examines the impact of L1 interference (Tamil) on students' understanding and usage of English grammar in writing. This study adopts mixed methods case study design. The data were collected from narrative writing samples and semi-structured interviews which were produced by 15 Year 6 SJKT students and from semi-structured interviews. Error analysis is used to analyse the written text to identify and sort out grammatical errors. Interview data were thematically analysed in order to explore learners' perceptions. The findings show recurrent 178 grammatical errors with most common ones involving subject verb agreement, tense usage, articles, word order, and prepositions. Many of these errors were caused by Tamil to English direct transfer. The interview results show that students often think in Tamil before writing in English, depend heavily on translation and possess limited awareness about English morphosyntax. The study concludes that L1 interference (Tamil) is a significant factor affecting English writing accuracy among SJKT pupils. Such an insight is useful to understand that they need more English input and writing practices that help think directly in English.

Keywords: English writing, error analysis,multi lingual, L1 interference, Tamil medium learners, error analysis,multi lingual

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INTRODUCTION

Writing in a second language remains one of the hardest literacy skills for bilingual learners as they must grasp grammar and be able to interpret meaning in two different languages. In Malaysia, where

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many languages are spoken, Tamil medium (SJKT) students often acquire English as a second language in environments in which Tamil is the main language at home and in the community. When students write in English in this sociolinguistics environment, they typically use Tamil grammatical patterns, which leads to mistakes in tense, articles, subject-verb agreement, prepositions, and word order (Krishnasamy et al., 2024; Maniam, 2021). This type of language interference is especially strong when children are under a lot of pressure to learn several different languages simultaneously. This makes it hard for them to use grammar, syntax, and vocabulary correctly in their writing (Mehat et al., 2024). Recent study on error analysis has shown that mother tongue influence is a major cause of ongoing grammatical problems for Tamil background speaking students and show that the differences in structure between Tamil and English, especially in syntax and morphology, lead to consistent errors like misplaced verbs, missing articles and wrong inflections (Maniam, 2021; Sheroon et al., 2025). These findings indicate that L1 interference arises not only from direct translation but also from profound grammatical transfer, which impacts students' ability to use English conventions in connected writing (Maniam, 2021; Sheroon et al., 2025). Many Malaysian academics also point to contextual and teaching factors that make grammatical problems worse, in addition to L1 effect((Abdul Ghani & Shing, 2019; Mehat & Ismail, 2021; Shamimah Mohideen, 2022).

Furthermore, studies on Malaysian ESL learners show that limited exposure to English outside the classroom, along with difficulties in applying grammatical rules in writing tasks contribute to recurring grammatical errors (Ali et al., 2023). Moreover, research on SJKT learners shows that although students may understand certain grammatical rules, they often struggle to apply them accurately in extended writing tasks. This is largely attributed to L1 interference, where mother tongue influence affects grammatical production in the target language (Krishnasamy et al., 2024).

Given this context, a focused case study evaluating how Tamil L1 interference impacts SJKT students' knowledge and use of English grammar in writing solves an important gap. Although the current research outlines common error types, there are a small number of studies that integrate learner perspectives, systematic error coding, and classroom realities to clarify the persistence of interference and its interaction with teaching approaches. Therefore, this study utilises an error analysis methodology, triangulated with student interviews and writing samples, to figure out the most persistent Tamil influenced grammatical patterns and provide classroom-oriented suggestions for improvement.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Educational and Linguistic Background of Tamil-Medium Learners in Malaysia

The Department of Statistics Malaysia reports that Indians constitute approximately 6.5%

of Malaysia's total population (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2024).Over 80% of this group are ethnic Tamils, which means that Tamil is the most common language used by Indian Malaysians (Mahalingam, 2023). Tamil medium National type primary communication across domains such school Sekolah Jenis Kebangsaan Tamil business, science, diplomacy and also (SJKT), are a big help in keeping the Tamil language and culture alive. In addition, there are about 523 SJKT schools in Malaysia right now. These schools serve about 60% of Indian Malaysian students, many of whom originate from families with low to moderate incomes (Nagappan et al., 2023). Despite their cultural importance, Tamil schools continue to face persistent challenges such as inadequate infrastructure, limited financial resources, and constrained access to educational support (Nagappan, 2023). Although government agencies and community organisations have made ongoing efforts to improve facilities and educational quality, these limitations continue to affect teaching and learning outcomes. In SJKT, Tamil serves as the primary medium of instruction for most of the subjects, which provides students with an extensive exposure to Tamil during their schooling years (Government of Malaysia, 2026). Due to this, students usually experience trouble learning English, especially when it comes to writing, where grammar and sentence structure are quite important.

Role of English in the Malaysian Education System

In Malaysia, English is an important second language and an important means for people all over the world to communicate to each other. English language is also widely recognised as a global lingua franca and is extensively used in international communication across domains such as business, science, diplomacy and also education (Abdullo qizi, 2026; Zeng & Yang, 2024). English is a compulsary subject in primary as well as secondary schools in Malaysian education system. It is also the main language of teaching at most university. Additionally, English language is widely used in Malaysia for official documentation, particularly in legal texts, financial transactions, contracts and international communication (Department of Information Malaysia, 2025). The Ministry of Education (MoE) has implemented several policy reforms to strengthen English language teaching upon recognising the importance of English for national development and global competitiveness. Moreover, major reforms include the introduction of the Kurikulum Bersepadu Sekolah Rendah (KBSR) and Kurikulum Bersepadu Sekolah Menengah (KBSM) under the Integrated Secondary School Curriculum in 1989, which emphasised communicative competence and speaking skills. Later, these initiatives were extended through the implementation of the Kurikulum Standard Sekolah Rendah (KSSR) and the English Language Education Roadmap 2015-2025, which aligned English language instruction

with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) (Yahaya & Wong, 2022).Studies show that many Malaysian students continue to face difficulties in achieving adequate English language proficiency despite years of formal instruction in schools especially in developing communicative competence when entering higher education (Nadesan & Shah, 2020).

English Language Learning in Tamil Vernacular

Learning English as a third language in vernacular schools may contribute to lower English proficiency among students as learners often face mother tongue interference and perceive English as a challenging subject (Kumaran & Krish, 2021). Studies also indicate that time allocation for English language lessons is 5 hours per week in the national schools, but only 2.5 hours per week in Tamil vernacular schools (Kumaran & Krish, 2021). Thus, students from Tamil vernacular schools have less exposure to the English language which may hinder their acquisition of the English language. Ironically, vernacular education in Malaysia allows minority communities to receive primary education in their respective mother tongues.On top of that, in SJKT, Tamil functions as the main medium of instruction while Bahasa Melayu is taught as a second language and English is offered as a third language in accordance with the national curriculum structure (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2026). In national schools, English is the second language and given greater emphasis in lessons. This is different from how it is established here. Research shows that students in Tamil medium schools receive considerably less exposure to English compared to their counterparts in national schools, where English is allocated approximately 300 minutes per week under the KSSR framework (Kumaran & Krish, 2021). SJKT schools have less chances to give students meaningful English practice since their curriculum is rigid and they don't have enough time to teach. As a result, interference from the first language (Tamil) becomes more noticeable especially in writing where students tend to transfer grammatical structures from their L1 into English (Al-Saggaf et al., 2022; Kumaran & Krish, 2021).

Writing needs the active production and organisation. Hence these learners frequently transfer Tamil sentence patterns into English, leading to chronic grammatical problems.

Grammar and Writing in Second Language Learning

Writing is a complicated skill that needs students to make writings that are grammatically correct, make sense, and well organised (Bulqiyah et al., 2021). In the second language (L2) acquisition, grammar is essential for facilitating learners in expressing meaning with clarity and precision. Grammatical knowledge includes syntax, morphology, and word classes, all of which are important for constructing meaningful sentences (Akbaş & Ölçü-

Dinçer, 2021). Tamil speaking students have a hard time learning English grammar since the two languages are very different in terms of their structure. Tamil is an agglutinative language with a subject-object-verb (SOV) word order and no article system.Whereas English follows a subject-verb-object (SVO) structure and relies on articles a well as tense marking. These structural differences between the two languages often lead to grammatical errors in English writing including incorrect tense usage, omission of articles, subject–verb agreement errors and non-standard sentence structures (Kumaran & Krish, 2021; Sinnappan & Abdul Samat, 2024; Sarveswaran, 2024).

Moreover, empirical study on ESL learners indicates that a concerning proportion of Tamil primary school students consistently exhibit grammatical errors in their written English.The grammatical errors remain frequent in writing, particularly in areas such as subject-verb agreement, verb tense, plural forms and word choice (Alyas, 2019; Permatasari et al., 2019). Such errors make writing less clear, structured, and better overall, which often leads to bad ratings.

Pedagogical Approaches to Grammar Instruction

In there is an ongoing discussion about the effective methods to teach grammar. Meaning focused training stresses using language in the context to communicate while form focused instruction stresses teaching grammatical rules directly. Moreover, research indicates that less proficient learners often benefit from explicit, form focused instruction while more advanced learners tend to respond more positively to implicit, meaningfulness approaches, depending on learner proficiency and grammatical complexity (van Rijt et al., 2019).

Nevertheless, questions persist regarding the effectiveness of specific grammar instruction in fostering effortless and intuitive language utilisation. On the other hand, some scholars argue that grammar knowledge developed through isolated rule based instruction may not always transfer effectively to communicative use unless it is reinforced through contextualised practice and meaningful language use (Nassaji, 2017). These findings reveal that grammar instruction must be tailored to the learners' skill levels and language backgrounds, especially in multilingual and vernacular educational settings like SJKT schools.

L1 Interference and Grammatical Errors in SJKT Learners' Writing

A growing body of research identifies L1 interference as a crucial factor contributing to grammatical errors in English writing among Tamil medium learners (Kumaran & Krish, 2021; Raman et al., 2022). Additionally, learners often import Tamil grammatical patterns into English since they don't hear or read English very often and rely a lot on Tamil grammar. Consequently, this leads to a pattern of repeated errors. Despite considerable evidence of grammatical challenges in informal education, there's a lack of focused research on how Tamil

as a first language affects the grammatical choices of SJKT students when they write extended essays.

While recent studies have examined the broad challenges faced by students in vernacular schools, they have not offered thorough assessments of how Tamil grammar is applied in their writing. This gap highlights the need for a detailed, context-specific investigation. Such an investigation is crucial for a better understanding of grammatical errors and for creating effective teaching strategies.

Theoretical Framework: Error Analysis and L1 Transfer Theory

This study is grounded in Error Analysis (EA) Theory (Corder, 1967; 1974) and L1 Transfer/Interference Theory (Selinker, 1972; Odlin, 1989), which together provide a comprehensive structure for investigating grammatical errors in second language writing. EA views learner errors as systematic and meaningful indicators of interlanguage development, as opposed to arbitrary errors. Consequently, it allows researchers to identify, classify, and measure errors, distinguishing between interlingual errors stemming from L1 influence and intralingual errors resulting from overgeneralisation or inadequate L2 proficiency. L1 Transfer Theory elucidates the impact of a learner's first language on the acquisition and utilisation of a second language. For Tamil speaking learners, features such as the absence of articles and the SOV word order in Tamil often result in article omission, verb placement errors, and non standard sentence structures in English writing (Kumaran & Krish, 2021; Raman et al., 2022). This study combines EA and L1 Transfer Theory to not only record the various types and frequency of grammatical errors in SJKT students' writing, but also to explain the linguistic reasons behind these errors. These theoretical approaches together enhance the understanding of Tamil L1 interference's impact on English grammatical precision and establish a foundation for establishing targeted pedagogical techniques to elevate English writing instruction in Tamil vernacular schools.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

In order to investigate the impact of first language (L1) interference from Tamil on the English grammar usage of SJKT students in writing, this study utilised mixed methods research design. A mixed methods approach is suitable as it integrates both quantitative and qualitative data, allowing for a more comprehensive understanding of language learning phenomena by combining statistical patterns with contextual interpretation (Creswell & Creswell, 2023).

The case study design allows a comprehensive analysis of students' genuine written work in a natural classroom environment, enabling the researcher to discern systemic grammatical mistake patterns and deduce their root causes (Yin, 2018). In the field of second language acquisition, case studies are extensively

employed to examine L1 transfer effects. This is because they reflect learners' authentic language usage rather than mere test performance (Duff, 2022).

Research Setting and Participants

The study was carried out in a Tamil medium vernacular primary school which is Sekolah Jenis Kebangsaan Tamil in Malaysia. Moreover, the participants for this study comprised of 15 Year 6 students and purposive sampling was used to select these students based on their consistent difficulties in English writing as identified by their English language teacher. These learners represented a typical linguistic profile of Tamil speaking students in vernacular schools, where Tamil is the primary language of instruction in daily communication. Here English is learned as a second or third language. Besides that, all participants used Tamil as their dominant language at home and in school which makes them appropriate subjects for examining Tamil L1 interference in English grammatical production.

Sampling Procedure

Purposive sampling was employed to select participants who met specific criteria that aligned with the research objectives (Campbell et al., 2020). The selection process involved consultation with the English teacher, examination of recent writing tasks and also confirmation that participants met the following inclusion criteria: (a) Tamil as their first language, (b) enrolment in Year 6, and (c) recurring grammatical errors in English for data collection, ethical approval was obtained from the school administration and written parental consent was secured for all participants who met the criteria.

Data Collection Instruments

Two tools have been utilised for gathering data: 1. Writing samples from students and 2. Semi-structured nterviews that are only partly structured. Each participant engaged in a narrative writing activity derived from a standardised prompt according to the Year 6 English curriculum. Narrative writing activities are effective in encouraging extended learner output which allows grammatical structures and error patterns to emerge during language production (Hyland, 2019). After the writing assignment, individual semi structured interviews were carried out to investigate students' impressions of their writing challenges, language usage habits and understanding of Tamil to English transfer. These semi structured interviews offer adaptability while ensuring uniformity across participants and are extensively utilised in qualitative language research (Cohen et al., 2022). Moreover, all interviews were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim.

Data Analysis

Students' written texts were analysed using EA procedures which involves error identification, classification and explanation as specified by Corder 1974. Then, these errors were categorised into grammatical areas such as subject verb agreement, tense

usage, articles, prepositions and sentence structure with particular emphasis on errors reflecting Tamil language transfer. It is evident that recent studies continue to support EA as a method for identifying interlanguage patterns in second language writing (Ferris, 2023).

Consequently, the interview transcripts were analysed using thematic analysis following the phases outlined by Braun and Clarke (2022) which includes familiarisation, coding, theme development and interpretation. For thematic analysis, the themes related to L1 influence, limited English exposure and also challenges in understanding English grammar were identified. Finally, data from both sources were triangulated to enhance the credibility of the findings.

Validity and Reliability

Validity and reliability of this study were assessed using approaches that enhance the overall credibility of the research process. Whereas Methodological triangulation, which collected data from students' written texts and semi structured interviews, enhanced validity, particularly for reliability. The utilisation of various data sources allowed the researcher to validate findings and confirm that interpretations of grammatical errors. This was based on both tangible linguistic evidence and students' reflections on their language usage. This triangulated technique reduced the likelihood of single source bias and improved the overall understanding of Tamil L1 interference in English grammatical formation (Creswell & Poth, 2023).

The systematic use of EA processes enhanced analytical validity by ensuring that grammatical errors were consistently identified, categorised and comprehended in accordance with recognised linguistic frameworks. Moreover, the categorisation of errors into specific grammatical classifications has guaranteed analytical accuracy and enabled meaningful comparisons across participants. The thematic analysis of interview data followed clear and systematic coding rules which made the results more reliable (Braun & Clarke, 2022). In addition, reliability was ensured by maintaining a clear and complete audit record of the study methods that included how data was collected, how it was transcribed, how it was coded and how it was analysed. This comprehensive recording makes it easier to look back at the research process. If necessary, the process will be repeated in a similar situation. Additionally, using a standardised writing prompt and the same interview questions for all participants has increased procedural dependability by making sure that data collection was consistent (Cohen et al., 2018). Finally, confirmability was attained by making all interpretations on empirical data derived directly from students' written samples and interview portion, to minimise researcher bias. During the analysis, reflexive awareness was maintained to ensure that conclusions were derived from the facts rather than prior assumptions. In mixed methods second language writing research these processes ensured that the study's findings are trustworthy, reliable and robust.

RESULTS

The findings from the analysis of students' written essays, the categorisation of grammatical errors and the semi structured interview data are presented in this section. Here the quantitative analysis reports the frequency and distribution of grammatical error types, while the qualitative analysis provides an in depth understanding of the influence of Tamil (L1) on students' English grammar usage. Moreover,the comprehensive and profound analysis revealed 178 grammatical errors in 15 student essays. Furthermore, the errors were organised into six distinct categories which are subject-verb agreement, tense errors, articles and determiners, prepositions, word order and plural/singular forms respectively. Table 1 presents the distribution, percentage, and mean for each category

The most common faults were subject-verb agreement and tense problems. This shows that Tamil had a big effect on morphology and syntax. Errors involving articles, prepositions and word order shown substantial evidence of L1 effect. Errors

Table 1
Types of recurrent English grammar errors among SJKT Tamil-medium learners

No.	Error Category	Description	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)	Mean
1	Subject-Verb Agreement	Incorrect matching of verb to subject number/person	42	24%	0.24
2	Tense Errors	Incorrect use of past, present, or continuous tenses	35	20%	0.20
3	Preposition Errors	Substitution/omission of prepositions due to L1 transfer	31	17%	0.17
4	Articles & Determiners	Misuse or omission of a, an, or the	28	16%	0.16
5	Word Order Errors	Tamil syntactic structure applied to English	24	13%	0.13
6	Plural/Singular Forms	Incorrect pluralisation influenced by Tamil morphology	18	10%	0.10
Total	—	—	178	100%	1.00

Table 2
Categories of Tamil (L1) interference in students' English grammar

No.	Type of L1 Interference	Description	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
1	Direct Translation	Literal Tamil-to-English transfer	29	33%
2	Morphological Transfer	Tamil tense/plural markers mapped incorrectly to English	24	28%
3	Syntactic Reordering	Use of SOV Tamil order instead of English SVO	22	25%
4	Omission Influence	Articles/prepositions omitted due to Tamil's grammatical structure	14	14%
Total	—	—	89	100%

pertaining to plural and singular forms were few, however noted among the majority of the students.

L1 (Tamil) Interference Categories

Besides identifying error frequencies, the analysis examined the specific types of Tamil linguistic transfer influencing students' English writing. As a result, four major categories emerged, as shown in Table 2.

Examples of Common Errors Found in Students' Writing

Table 3 provides examples of incorrect student sentences, corrected versions, and the type of L1 influence involved. To illustrate the nature of the grammatical difficulties, these examples highlight how Tamil language structures influence students' English writing, resulting in recurring errors in tense, subject-verb agreement, articles, prepositions, word order, and plural forms.

Interview Findings and Thematic Analysis

In order to explore students' awareness of their errors, their writing processes and the impact of Tamil on their English grammar semi structured interviews were carried out. During the interview process, five questions were posed as shown in Table 4. The interview data offered valuable insights into the impact of Tamil (L1) on

Table 3
Representative grammar errors and corrected forms

Error Type	Student Sample (Incorrect)	Corrected Form	L1 Influence
Tense	"He go to school yesterday."	"He went to school yesterday."	Tamil: unchanged verb root
SVA	"My friends is playing."	"My friends are playing."	Tamil verbs do not inflect for number
Articles	"I bought pen from shop."	"I bought a pen from the shop."	Tamil lacks articles
Prepositions	"She sat in the car behind."	"She sat behind the car."	Different spatial markers in Tamil
Word Order	"I food eating now."	"I am eating food now."	Tamil SOV order
Plural	"Two boy came."	"Two boys came."	Tamil plural rules differ

Table 4
Interview Questions and Sample Student Responses

No.	Interview Question	Sample Student Response	Identified Theme
1	When you write in English, do you think in Tamil first or in English? Why?	"I think in Tamil first because it is easier."	Over-reliance on Tamil Structure
2	Which parts of English grammar do you find most difficult, and why?	"I get confused with is, are, was because Tamil doesn't change verbs."	Limited English Morphosyntax

Table 4 (*continued*)

No.	Interview Question	Sample Student Response	Identified Theme
3	Can you give an example of a sentence you find difficult to write in English?	"I write 'I food eating' because that is Tamil order."	Syntactic Transfer
4	Do you often translate Tamil sentences directly into English?	"I always translate straight from Tamil."	Direct Translation
5	What helps you learn English grammar better?	"I learn better with examples and reading."	Exposure to English Input

Table 5
Coded themes and supporting statement frequency

Theme No.	Theme	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
1	Overreliance on Tamil Structure	18	39%
2	Limited Awareness of English Morphosyntax	15	33%
3	Insufficient Exposure to English Input	13	28%
Total	—	46	100%

the students' use of English grammar. These five semi structured questions were posed to investigate students' cognitive processes during writing, their perceived challenges with grammar, their inclination to translate directly from Tamil and the educational environments that facilitate their English language development. As shown in Table 4 students frequently stated that they first thought in Tamil before writing in English, which led to direct translations and structural shifts. Many encountered difficulties with English grammar, particularly with subject-verb agreement, verb tenses, and the use of articles.

This is because these features lack direct counterparts in Tamil. Upon request for challenging sentence examples, numerous students generated constructions that mirrored the SOV pattern characteristic of Tamil. Students acknowledged that they frequently translate Tamil sentences directly into English even when they are uncertain about the accuracy. Ultimately, they conveyed that engagement with accurate English examples, instructional clarifications and organised practice significantly contributed to their advancement. The analysis of these responses revealed three main themes as shown in Table 5. Those are an over reliance on Tamil structure, a limited awareness of English morphosyntactic rules and insufficient exposure to English input respectively.

Narrative Integration of Interview Data

The responses from the interviews highlighted three prominent themes as shown in Table 5. At first, numerous students acknowledged that they formulate

sentences in Tamil mentally before attempting an English translation which led to direct syntactic transfer and structural inaccuracies. Secondly, students conveyed confusion about English grammatical rules, especially concerning tense usage, subject verb agreement, and articles, as there are no equivalent markers in Tamil. Third, students indicated that their exposure to English beyond the classroom was limited, which led to their dependence on Tamil structures in their writing.

Comprehensive Error Distribution by Student

Table 6 provides a detailed breakdown of the grammatical errors made by each of the 15 SJKT students included in the study. Moreover, the table shows how different learners make different kinds of errors by putting them into groups such as subject-verb agreements, tense errors, articles, and determiners, prepositions, word order, and plural/singular forms. Table 6 also provides a comprehensive overview of error patterns and illustrates the extent to which L1 (Tamil) interference impacts each student's writing. The data showed that students made mistakes in different areas and these errors varied in how often they happened and what they were. According to research, most of the errors were in subject-verb agreement (42 times) followed by tense mistakes (35 times). This observation supports the information presented in Table 1. Sometimes, students faced challenges with these categories because Tamil doesn't use verb inflections to show subject-verb agreement or tense, unlike English.

Table 6
Errors by student across all categories

No.	Student Code	SVA	Tense	Articles	Prepositions	Word Order	Plural	Total
1	S1	4	3	2	2	1	1	13
2	S2	3	2	1	3	2	1	12
3	S3	2	3	3	1	2	2	13
4	S4	3	2	2	3	1	1	12
5	S5	4	3	2	1	2	0	12
6	S6	3	2	1	2	3	1	12
7	S7	2	1	2	3	1	2	11
8	S8	3	3	2	2	1	1	12
9	S9	4	2	1	1	3	1	12
10	S10	3	3	2	2	1	1	12
11	S11	2	2	3	1	2	2	12
12	S12	3	2	2	3	1	1	12
13	S13	4	3	1	2	2	1	13
14	S14	2	2	2	1	2	1	10
15	S15	3	3	1	2	1	2	12
Total	—	42	35	28	31	24	18	178

This indicates a significant impact of Tamil on the morphological and syntactic aspects of English. The structural differences between Tamil and English are shown by the 28 errors related to articles and determiners, 31 errors involving prepositions and the 24 errors in word order. Similarly, the lack of articles in Tamil along with its more flexible spatial markers, might explain why students often omit or change words in their writing.

In addition, students sometimes made errors with word order because they used Tamil's subject-object-verb (SOV) structure instead of English's subject-verb-object (SVO) structure. Moreover, the plural/singular category had the fewest errors with only 18, yet most students still made them. This means that even when students know some of the criteria for making English plural, the morphological plural indicators from Tamil may still make them less consistent in how they use English. The majority of whereas the student with the fewest errors (S14) made 10 errors. This shows that L1 interference was a big problem in this group. shows that grammatical challenges are common and come in many forms and a lot of them happening in areas where Tamil and English have the most structural differences. These results validate the previously identified quantitative patterns and provide a comprehensive insight into the difficulties encountered by individual learners.

DISCUSSION

This study examined how Tamil, the students' first language, affected the grammatical accuracy of English writing among students at SJKT. The analysis used data from written essays, error analysis, and interviews. The results show that Tamil significantly influenced the students' grammatical choices especially in areas where the structural differences between the two languages are most obvious.

Quantitative data reveals consistent errors in subject-verb agreement, tense usage, article application, preposition selection, and word order, all of which are closely linked to structural differences between Tamil and English. The prevalence of subject-object-verb (SOV) word order, coupled with the omission of articles and auxiliary verbs, suggests a definitive pattern of first language (L1) transfer, rather than simple mistakes.

Qualitative data corroborate this finding by demonstrating that students frequently formulate their ideas in Tamil before translating them into English, thereby leading to syntactic interference and grammatical errors. Despite this, interviews revealed that students have a limited understanding of English morphosyntactic rules and don't use the language much outside of class. These factors together lead to consistent errors, rather than random ones. Studies show that Tamil speaking students' first language greatly affects their English writing skills. To help with this, it's important to use clear contrastive instruction, give students many examples of correct English and assign writing tasks that encourage thinking in English, rather than translating from Tamil.

By looking at how Tamil affects English grammar use, teachers may come up with

good ways to help students improve their writing and make fewer mistakes that keep happening.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the findings reveal that 15 SJKT students experienced grammatical difficulties in their English writing, with subject–verb agreement and tense errors occurring most frequently. Errors involving articles and determiners, prepositions, word order and plural/singular forms further highlight the challenges students face when applying English grammatical rules. These patterns suggest that structural differences between Tamil and English may contribute to learners' grammatical difficulties especially in areas involving verb morphology, article usage and sentence structure. However, L1 interference should be considered alongside other possible contributing factors, such as learners' proficiency levels and exposure to English. Overall, the findings demonstrate the importance of examining both the frequency and nature of grammatical errors to better understand students' writing difficulties and inform targeted English grammar instruction for Tamil speaking learners.

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