CHAPTER 2

2.0 Review of Related Literature

In this section the investigator intends to discuss relative literature in contrastive analysis and error analysis done locally and abroad.

2.1 Errors and Mistakes

Mistakes are actually errors of performance and are unsystematic whereas errors are systematic and indicative of the learners' competence. Native speakers of a language frequently produce ill-formed utterances. This is due to performance factors such as memory limitations, carelessness, indecision, stress or fatigue. These types of mistakes are actually adventitious artifacts of linguistic performance and they do not reflect a defect in the knowledge of the language acquired. According to Corder (1967), 'Mistakes' are of no significance to the process of learning, but however a learner's errors provide evidence of the system of the language that he is using at a particular point in the course although it is not yet the right system.

According to Bennet, W.A. (1974)

> "To err is human, to forgive inevitable. Otherwise there would be no human activity possible."

Errors always occur practically in all human activities. Naturally, errors are committed in language learning processes. The number of errors and the nature of errors committed by a person can indicate his or her competence in the particular language.

George (1972) describes an error as,

> " an unwanted form, specially, a form which a particular course designer or teacher does not want (P:2)

A study in the kinds of errors and the interpretation of errors into various frequency tables will provide some information on the learner's competence level in the particular language acquisition. The correct responses of the learner give us an indication of the parts of the language system that the learners mastered, whereas the errors will indicate the areas of weaknesses. The errors can be corrected through appropriate remedial measures.

Mohsen Ghadessy (1989) says;

> " If errors can serve as indicators of progress and success and hence account for linguistic competence, then as a variable they can be measured in the same way that language competence is measured by considering the correct answers in various types of ESL tests".
>
> (Mohsen Ghadessy, IRAL Xxvii/I:53

According to Corder (1978) learners' errors are significant in three different ways. Firstly, these errors can tell the teacher how far towards the goal the learner has progressed and consequently what remains for him to learn. Secondly, they provide the researcher evidence of how language is learned or acquired, what strategies / procedures the learner is employing in his discovery of the language. Finally, but most importantly, these errors are indispensable to the learner himself, because we can regard the making of errors as a devise the learner uses in order to learn.

2.2 Systematic and Performance Errors

Systematic errors are errors committed by the writers who has a lack of knowledge on grammar. It is also caused by attitudinal problem and interference of spoken version.

Normally when brought to attention they would not be able to correct it.

Example :

அந்த கோபுரத்தில் should have been written as அந்தக் கோபுரத்தில்

ஊக்குவிப்புக்கள் should have been written as ஊக்குவிப்புகள்

நடை பெற்று வரும் should have been written as நடைபெற்றுவரும்

In the case of performance errors, it is committed by writers who are normally careless. It is committed either due to typing errors or in order to fill in the space when justifying through the computer. These errors will be corrected if brought to the attention of the writers.

Example :

இந்தக் கோபுரத்தை **நிர்**
வகிக்கும் பொறுப்பை ... should have been written as
இந்தக் கோபுரத்தை **நிர்வகிக்கும்** பொறுப்பை ...

போலீஸ் அப்பகுதிக்கு **விரைந்து தடுப்பை ஏற்படுத்திய தோடு** ... should have been written as போலீஸ் அப்பகுதிக்கு விரைந்து, **சாலைத்**தடுப்பை ஏற்படுத்தியதோடு ...

கூடந்தாண்டு should have been written as கடந்த ஆண்டு

2.3 Expressive and Receptive Errors

Errors can occur in expressive or receptive forms. Receptive errors are errors of comprehension, which can obviously be studied indirectly by inference from the learner's linguistic and non-linguistic utterances in the target language. Answers to questions and obedience to orders are two examples of such activities.

The errors we most readily and explicitly observe are in the expressive form, that is in either the spoken or written form. In spontaneous production there can be deliberate avoidance of the areas where the learner feels uncertain. In the controlled production case, there is always likelihood in that the learner's text will contain memorized or partly memorized passages. In addition, there is also the problem of comprehension of the messages of the original texts. Corder (1974) aptly terms controlled productive material as

'error provoking' and spontaneous production as 'error avoiding'. The investigator is of the opinion that spontaneous productive materials will be a more appropriate data for studies in error analysis. As such the investigator uses a free composition as a test material.

2.4 Spoken and Written Tamil

Comparative research on error analysis among students learning a second or target language is more popular than research on first language. An analysis of the errors in the Tamil Language made by the native speakers are usually considered to be the errors of first language. This is not true if we realize the difference between the spoken and written Tamil.

According to Karunakaran (1978),

> "Tamil is a diaglossic language in which exists two varieties, namely the literal variety and the spoken variety which are differentiated structurally as well as functionally'.

His view is shared by others like Meenakshisundaram (1974), Annamalai (1975), Yesudhasan (1976) who are also of the same opinion, that the two forms - spoken and written

Tamil differ so much phonologically and structurally that they can be regarded as two different languages.

According to Arokianathan;

> "the mother tongue speakers of diaglossic languages will all know the spoken variety. This they acquire naturally from their living circumstances. But, the formal variety has to be learnt. Therefore, formal learning of a language refers to the literary variety". (1986: p.24)

The ordinary speakers of Tamil as well as more highly educated Tamils do not use the written form of Tamil in their daily conversation. One feels out of place to use the literary language in normal conversations because it tends to give a sense of artificiality setting. A person uses the literary form only in formal speeches or in written works. Thus literary Tamil is more closely associated with written works.

Spoken and written Tamil differ very much at the phonological level. Many letters and words are not properly pronounced as they should be.

DavaNe:san (1955) writes,

> "the letter ழ / ḻ / is peculiar to Tamil and is not properly pronounced even in words of which it is an integral part. Tamilians attach much importance to the letter, for the reasons, that it sounds sweet to the Tamil ear and that it occurs in many words signifying an excellent object or idea ...
>
> Another letter peculiar to Tamil is the hard ற / ṟ / .In many words of Semitic origin, it is unscrupulously substituted for the medial or liquid ர / r /."

As there is widespread belief that the spoken language strongly influences the written, one can theorize that most of the errors committed orally would readily be found in the written language too. (Yap Soon Hock : 1973).

The difference between the spoken and written Tamil is so great that one who is fluent in both versions can be regarded as bilingual. This is supported by Rama Subbiah (1966) who says that,

"both standard Tamil and colloquial Tamil have been found existing side by side and most educated Tamils even now are bilinguals".

The above facts clearly shows that, the written and spoken Tamil are different structurally and phonologically. As such, the native speakers of Tamil, while learning written Tamil formally encounter the same or similar problems that students face in learning a second language.

Lim Kiat Boey (1975) states;

> "A question often discussed with regard to second language learning is whether it is the same as the first language acquisition. The answer depends on the stage at which the second language is learned. If it is learned at an early age before the first language is thoroughly mastered or almost simultaneously with the first language then second language learning ... parallels first language learning. If it is learned at a latter stage in the formal school setting, there are several observable differences".

When the Tamil pupils begin to learn written Tamil in the formal school setting they are very fluent in spoken

discourse. On the basic of the above notion, it is obvious that the Tamil pupils are prone to the influences of language interference. Although written Tamil is the medium of instruction, spoken Tamil dominates pupils conversation among their peer groups and teachers during school hours and social activities outside the school premises.

2.5 Contrastive Analysis

The school of contrastive analysis contend that errors committed in the target language are the result of negative transfer of the mother tongue features into the target language.

According to Lado (1957):

> "Individuals tend to transfer the forms and meanings and the distribution of forms and meanings of their native language and culture to the foreign language and culture" (P:2)

Contrastive analysis assumes that aspects of a target language which are similar to the mother tongue are easier to learn and aspects of a target language which are different from mother tongue are difficult to learn. This can be clearly seen in the quoted statement of Charles C. Fries (1945)

"The most effective materials (for foreign language teaching) are based upon a scientific description of the language to be learned, carefully compared with a parallel description of the native language of the learner". (P:9)

Critics of contrastive analysis disagree with the notion that the mother tongue interference is the sole source of errors in foreign language learning. These critics showed through the studies they undertook and the empirical data obtained, that the contrastive analysis predictions are not true. H.V.George in his book, 'common errors in language learning' noted that only about 33% of the errors committed were attributed to mother tongue interference.

2.6 Error Analysis

As a result of much criticism towards contrastive analysis and an inability to give exhaustive accounts of all the errors committed by second / foreign language learners, a new approach to error analysis came into being. Proponents of error analysis like Corder, Jack Richards and Duskova contend that there are inter language errors and intra language errors in second language learning. Inter language errors are errors due to mother tongue

interference while intra language errors are due to difficulties, in the target language itself. Through error analysis, these errors are systematically collected analyzed and categorized. Error analysis is based on the assumption that the frequencies of errors are proportional to the degree of learning difficulties.

Error analysis has been largely influenced by developments in the study of first language acquisition by children. Children acquire their mother tongue language, from their own rules and hypotheses about the language. The errors committed by a child cannot be considered as redundancies of the adult language system. These errors are considered as evidence that the child is in the process of acquiring language.

Corder (1978) says that;

> "No one expects a child learning his mother tongue to produce from the earliest stages only forms which in adult terms are correct on non-deviant. We interpret his 'incorrect' utterances as acquiring language ... " (p.91)

According to Jack Richards (1974), second language learner, like first language learners tries to drive the rules behind the data to which he has been exposed and may

develop hypotheses that correspond neither to the mother tongue nor the target language. Thus error analysis is applicable to investigation on the processes of first language acquisition as well as second language learning.

2.7 Error Classification

Researchers analyzing errors committed in spoken discourse and writing have classified the errors into various categories. Ho Wah Kam (1972) used a total of 250 compositions of students from 13 Chinese medium schools with pre-university classes in Singapore (223 test scripts and 27 compositions written in class) as corpus for his study. The papers contained 300 - 400 words. A total of 4813 errors were classified into seven categories:

i) verbs (including subject - verb concord)
ii) number in nouns
iii) lexical items (forms and meaning)
iv) function words (prepositions, pronouns, relatives etc.)
v) sentence structure
vi) articles and
vii) spelling

Yap Soon Hock (1973) analyzed errors in the composition of 497 primary school pupils in standard 4, 5 and 6 in Kuala Lumpur. the pupils were asked to write a 30 minute composition each on topics like 'my family' and 'my teacher'. The main errors were classified under five categories; namely;

i) punctuation
ii) capitalization
iii) word form
iv) structural errors
v) spelling

Lim (1976) studied the composition errors of 50 secondary school pupils and classified them under 13 categories as follows:

i) tenses
ii) agreement
iii) articles
iv) pronouns
v) infinitive and gerundive constructions
vi) possessive and attributive structures
vii) word order
viii) incomplete structures
ix) negative constructions
x) lexical categories
xi) mechanics of writing

xii) use of typical native language words and

xiii) miscellaneous

Lee (1986) in her practicum report mentions about Richard's (1971) comparative cross-national study of errors in Japanese, Chinese, Burmese, French, Czech, Polish, Maori, Maltee and the major Indian and West African languages. The errors were studied in the context of intra-lingual and developmental theory of second language learning and most of these errors fit into major typologies of overgeneralization, ignorance of rule restrictions, incomplete application of rules and the building of false systems of concepts. These errors were separated into six categories, namely;

i) Errors in the production of verb groups
ii) Errors in the distribution of verb groups
iii) Errors in the use of prepositions
iv) Errors in the use of articles
v) Errors in the use of questions
vi) Miscellaneous errors.

Pillai and Vimala (1982) suggested that, on the basis of language structure, the errors can be categorized under five main categories as follows:

i) Spelling
ii) Morphology
iii) Word combination (Junctional features)
iv) Syntactical errors
v) Lexis

They further suggested eight categories with reference to the cause of errors, as listed below:

i) overgeneralization
ii) over extension of target language rules
iii) developmental errors
iv) mother tongue interference
v) filter language interference
vi) simplification errors
vii) induced errors and
viii) errors due to unlearned aspects.

2.8 Some Studies in Error Analysis

Meziani (1984) conducted a study on errors in English committed by Moroccan students indicated that the most recurrent errors are in the use of 'tenses'. Out of the 13 categories listed, errors attributed to tenses accounted for 39.2%. Earlier researchers like Schwartz (1971), Kunkle (1973), Heinamaki (1974) and Kompf (1975) also acknowledged that most of the learners of English as

second language, (no matter what their mother tongue is) encounter problem in mastering tenses.

Sreetharan (1986) reports that Seah (1974) and Koh (1975), through their researches, had pointed out that numerous affixes which are productive in Bahasa Malaysia has posed problems in the learning of Bahasa Malaysia by non-Malay adult learners.

Kadir Amin (1982) analyzed the errors in the use of Bahasa Malaysia committed by 75 pupils from two primary schools in Malacca. He found that bilinguals commit less errors than monolinguals in essay writing. On the other hand, the bilinguals commit more grammatical errors than monolinguals.

Raminah Sabran (1983) carried out her research on grammatical errors committed in Bahasa Malaysia by 100 selected teacher trainees who are native speakers of that language. She contrasted the errors committed by trainees who were from Malay medium schools against those committed by trainees from English medium schools. Her finding was that those from Malay medium schools committed more errors (55.5%) than the trainees from English medium schools (44.5.%).

Angela Lee (1986) analyzed written errors in English of 65 form five students. She used two dictation passages as test

instruments. She found that her subjects made mostly substitution errors which accounted for 49.4% of the overall errors. According to her, the finding reflected on the pupils lack of knowledge in the English vocabulary.

2.9 Error Analysis in Tamil

There are numerous research works on error analysis conducted on the performances of students learning second or foreign language. However there seems to be only few studies on first language acquisition. In the case of Tamil language, error analysis is comparatively new. According to Nadarasa Pillai and Vimala (1981) in the preface to the book, 'Pi̲lai a:ivu; mo̲li ka̲rpittalil oru putiya pa;rvai ' there is very little research work done on teaching and learning processes in the Tamil language. Researches on error analysis are even rarer.

In Tamil Nadu, India, error analysis in Tamil was undertaken by Ramachandran (1978), Susila Bai (1979), Irulappan (1980), Pillai and Vimala (1981) and Sharma (1982). Ramachandran's effort on error analysis is the first of this kind known in Tamil. He used 20 test papers, some news papers, magazines, advertisements and wall posters as materials for his analysis.

Susila Bai (1979) wrote a research paper on 'Difficulties in learning Tamil by native speakers'. This research paper discusses the difficulties faced by 6, 7 and 8th year students of Tamil, in Tamil Nadu, in the correct use of the words 'a:na:l' , 'atana:l' and 'a:gaiya:l'. Irulappan conducted a study on the syntactical errors committed in compositions by 30 students of 6, 7 and 8th year.

Pillai and Vimala (1981) together conducted a study on the errors committed by adult learners of Tamil as second language in the South Regional Language Centre, Mysore. While teaching Tamil to students with different mother tongues, they collected approximately 6000 errors for analysis.

Sharma (1982) conducted a study on the problems in learning Tamil as a second language by native speakers of Telegu. He discussed the difficulties caused by the diaglossic nature of Tamil and the structural difference between Tamil and Telugu languages.

There are some studies on error analysis in Tamil undertaken in Singapore. K.Ramaiah (1987) conducted error analysis of 540 written compositions by 180 secondary four express class students. Each student was asked to write three compositions. Ramaiah classified the errors into non-interference errors (intra-lingual) and interference

errors (inter lingual). Under non-interference errors he listed eight categories of errors namely:

i) phonological
ii) morphological
iii) morphophonemic
iv) syntactic
v) semantic
vi) graphemic
vii) vocabulary and
viii) spoken language influence

In the inter-lingual categories he tabulated the interference caused by English, Malay and Malayalam Language.

Muthiah (1987) undertook an analysis in the types of errors committed by final year primary school Tamil learners in examination papers.

Govindasamy (1988) conducted a research on the use of dictation as a tool in identifying the errors committed in language learning. He used 116 standard five pupils from nine primary schools as sample. A total of 1300 errors were classified under 12 categories.

Sreetharan (1986) states that there is no error analysis carried out in Tamil language learning in Malaysia, prior to

his effort. Sreetharan (1986) analyzed errors committed by 33 final year teacher trainees from a teacher training college in Kuala Lumpur. Sreetharan used two dictation passages as test instruments. His findings showed that the most recurrent errors are related to Junctional features.

Subramaniam (1995) analyzed errors in the written Tamil of primary school pupils. He involved 50 primary six pupils from two Tamil schools. His findings showed that there are 12 categories of errors committed by the primary six pupils.