

CHAPTER 5

5.1 FINDINGS

The findings reveal that the Tamil newspapers have been allowing systematic, performance and typological errors to get by. These papers have made ten types of common errors. They are as follows:

5.1.1 Systematic errors

5.1.1.1 Junctional features

5.1.1.2 Illogical / Incomplete sentence construction

5.1.1.3 Junction features

5.1.1.4 Using the wrong English / Malay translation

5.1.1.5 Unnecessary splitting of words

5.1.2. Performance Errors

5.1.2.1 Addition / Omission of a letter.

5.1.2.2 Omission / Replacement of a word.

5.1.2.3 Wrong usage of punctuation marks.

5.1.2.4 Unnecessary joining of words.

5.1.2.5 Unnecessary splitting of words.

From the analysis of the data collected, it is found that there is one most common systematic errors committed by all the three Tamil papers. These errors are the Junctional features which is related to */punarcci/* rules. The other most common

errors are categorized as performance errors. They are the Unnecessary splitting of words which seems to be the most common error in this category followed by the wrong usage of punctuation marks. The number of systematic errors are less compared to the number of performance errors.

5.2 SUMMARY

This study involves 50 passages taken from the three Tamil daily newspapers, namely Tamil Ne:san, Malaysia Nanpan and Tina Muracu. 18 passages were taken from Tamil Ne:san, 15 were taken from Malaysia Nanpan while 17 were taken from Tina Muracu. The passages were selected at random for a period of one month. Different types of passages were selected namely current news, sports, passages and articles.

The study is conducted with the aim to identify the types of common errors committed by the Tamil daily newspapers. It is found that Unnecessary splitting of words and Junctional features errors account for most errors recorded. The other categories of errors like wrong usage of punctuation marks and word or letter omission / replacement errors constitute negligibly small percentages of the total number of errors.

5.3 DISCUSSION

As for all the above common errors found in the papers, the investigator had an interview with two editors, Mr. Vivegananthan who is the chief editor of Tamil Ne:san and Mrs. Saratha Kannan who is involved in editing the Malaysia Nanpan.

In the case of Junctional features */puṇarcci/*, there are several reasons for errors to occur in such big numbers. It could be due to the reporters, typists, proof-readers and editors who have not acquired a good command of the grammatical rules related to this aspect of the language.

Saratha Kannan, in the interview conducted by the investigator, says, " When the reporters send in the news itself it contains a lot of errors. After being corrected by the editors it is given to the typists to be typed into the computer. During this process the typists make mistakes. Some proof-readers and editors who do not have a good command of the language, overlook these errors as they are not very sure about it."

On the other hand Vivegananthan says that even the news or reports sent by the school teachers have errors of these kind. At times it confuses the editors and thus they leave it as it is.

This setback is worsened by the fact that the grammar is not taught as a separate language component in schools. In the 'Kurikulum Lama Sekolah Rendah' (KLSR) and 'Kurikulum Lama Sekolah Menengah' (KLSM) syllabus the grammar aspect was not classified. Thus, it was up to the teachers concerned to teach grammar as he or she likes. If the teacher had a liking for grammar, he taught with clarity but if they choose not to, there was no pressure on them to teach it. In other words the teaching of grammar was not mandatory.

As for now although the 'Kurikulum Bersepadu Sekolah Rendah' (KBSR) and 'Kurikulum Bersepadu Sekolah Menengah' (KBSM) syllabus has the grammar aspect in them they require grammar to be taught indirectly with other language skills. Thus, the people are not consciously aware of the many rules and restrictions governing the morphophonemic aspects of the Tamil Language.

The investigator contends that the */puṇarcci/* rules governing word combinations in Tamil, are in themselves difficult to master. Firstly, the rules governing word combination in Tamil are many. Then there are either instances where one rule contradicts another or, exceptions to the rule.

Tamizhannal (1994) discusses this reality with great concern. He says that there are more than a hundred rules on addition or omission of stops. What is applicable to one may not be applicable to another because most of these rules are contextual.

Given below is an example of how one rule contradicts another:

A rule for non-addition of stops states that, in words ending with the shorter nasal plosive (மென்றெடர்க் குற்றியலுகரம்) there will be no addition of stops.

Example : **வந்து பார்த்தான்.** /vantu pa:rtta:n/

But, after demonstrative adverbs like அங்கு /aṅku/ இங்கு /iṅku/ எங்கு /eṅku/ which are nasal plosives (மென்றெடர்க் குற்றியலுகரம்) addition of stop is required.

Example : **அங்குப் பார்** /aṅkup pa:r/.

There are many such instances of exceptions and overlappings.

Another obvious reason is that these errors do not seriously affect communication. A sentence with this type of errors

can still convey the accurate message when listened to or read. As such the public do not take these errors seriously.

If we were to suggest that wide reading and proper knowledge in the grammatical rules would help the reporters, typists and the editors to acquire a better understanding of these rules, again it turns out to be a sad argument. The cheapest and readily available reading materials are the Tamil newspapers and the magazines from Tamil Nadu and Sri Lanka. Most of these printed materials do not pay serious attention to these grammatical aspects of language. In fact, writings and articles in those newspapers and magazines contains so many errors, especially the 'puṇarcci' errors, against which many academicians and language enthusiasts have voiced their discontent in many forums. Thus those newspapers and magazines also become error-inducing agents instead of being error eradicators. In fact the local reporters, typists and the editors seem to be following the footsteps of their counterparts in Tamil Nadu and Sri Lanka.

As for the knowledge of grammar rules in Tamil, it is quite difficult to understand the rules from the classical books such as */naṇṇo:l/* or */toḷka:ppiyam/*, with the limited knowledge that they acquire from the formal education.

Further more, newspapers seem to be of the opinion that imparting news, that is messages is their sole function and how they do it is unimportant. They do not seem to think that they play a very important role in the preservation, survival and propagation of the language.

Thus, these multitudes of factors are the causes for the reporters, typists, proof-readers and the editors to commit numerous errors in Tamil morphophonemics in the three Tamil newspapers selected by the investigator.

As for the Unnecessary splitting of words, Vivegananthan feels that the readers would still understand even if it is separated. He claims that since they have to write the news into the size of the columns given, they are forced to split the words for justification. He also says that the Tamil computer programme used by his paper is such that the splitting of words cannot be avoided .

On the other hand Saratha Kannan agrees that the splitting of words should not have occurred. She claims that when the newspapers were using the old way of composing the news this error had never occurred. The present Tamil computer programme is set in such a way that the words are automatically splitted and nothing can be done about it by her newspaper. She feels that the Tamil computer programme should be changed to suit the needs.

The other types of error, that was committed mostly was replacing a word with another. A few inferences can be made from this. Firstly, it shows that the reporters, typists, proof-readers and the editors sometimes are not well versed with the language. Some of the words seem to have occurred due to typing errors. Next, the people concerned just put in a word as they translate. Together with inadequate knowledge of the words, these factors contribute to the large number of errors in the category.

As for the errors of wrong usage of punctuation mark, it is evident that the people concerned do not bother about the punctuation mark. At times they forget to put a full stop or a coma. This could be due to carelessness or that they just copy.

Another obvious reason is that these errors do not seriously affect communication. A sentence with this type of errors can still convey the correct message when read. As such the people concerned do not take this error as a serious one.

Illogical or incomplete sentence construction is the next common error recorded by the investigator. Due to this error the sentence does not seem to convey the message. This normally happens to too long and winding sentences. There are also errors where a subject or a predicate goes missing.

This could be due to negligence of the typist and also due to time constraints. The editors or the proof-readers do not have a chance to read the news once it is typed. This could be overcome by reading again by the proof-readers just before it is printed.

Another most common error is the usage of wrong translation. This could be due to the editors who do not understand the meaning of the word. This could also be due to the people who do not follow the latest development.

Example : வெள்ளி /*velli*/ for ரிங்ஜிட் /*ringgit malaysia*/

The other types of errors are few and generally indicate the poor level of competence in the language. These categories of errors as shown in Table 1, individually show certain error patterns. The interested parties should formulate certain remedial measures to overcome these errors.

5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this research, the investigator deems it fit to suggest the following recommendations, especially for the benefit of the reporters, typists, proof-readers and the editors involved in the journalist's world.

This research has identified two common errors, which should be avoided in order to cultivate the habit of correct written form of Tamil in the future. The most important one is the proper splitting of the words. The journalists should bear in mind that their commitment in developing good Tamil is even greater than the teachers. The teachers are only involved until a person is in the school. After this it is the duty of the journalists to develop the language further.

As for the said error, the two editors interviewed have different opinions. Vivegananthan says that it could not be avoided as they have to fill in the gaps and the program is set in such a way that the splitting is done automatically to justify the lines. This could not be accepted as a valid reason. The investigator would like the newspapers to have a program that could ensure the proper splitting of the words as the negligence may bring about a confusion in writing the correct form. The newspapers should use a better program to avoid these errors and the investigator feels that some thing must be done to better the Tamil language in the Tamil newspapers.

The investigator agrees with Saratha Kannan's suggestion that the splitting of words can be avoided if the programmers can come out with a better program. She also admits with the fact that this form of writing may spoil the correct form in future.

The newspapers' publishers should join together in producing a new program which may overcome these errors. The Tamil Neesan particularly could also broaden their columns in order to avoid the unnecessary splitting of words as this daily has committed the most number of errors in this category.

This research has also identified that */puṇarcci/* rules pose another major problem in Tamil writing. Studies conducted by K.Sreetharan (1986) and K.Ramiah (1987) further strengthen this notion and help conclude that these errors are committed at all levels; in schools, colleges and even universities.

The investigator believes that the basic cause for committing these errors is a lack of knowledge on the grammatical rules of this aspect. To improve the performances of Tamil learners in this morphophonemic aspect of Tamil, the investigator fully supports K.Sreetharan's (1986) recommendation that this aspect of Tamil grammar be taught directly from primary level. Since there are many rules governing this grammatical aspect of Tamil, the pupils should be taught the most fundamental and simple rules first, followed gradually, by the more difficult and complex rules. A clear understanding of the rules and restrictions would enable the pupils to write confidently and commit very few, if not, no mistakes at all.

The problem of Tamil learners committing many */puṇarcci/* errors and the ambiguities surrounding these rules have been debated in many forums. One suggestion is that */puṇarcci/* rules be taught more on a functional approach than a theoretical one. Many scholars of today agree on the urgent need to simplify these rules to suit present needs.

Tamizhannal (1994) suggests that a new grammar in Tamil has to be produced in a simplified version for the present day student. The investigator fully agrees with this suggestion, especially in the Malaysian and Singapore settings where a student has to be equally, if not more, competent in Malay and English Language in addition to Tamil.

The teacher on his/ her part has to identify the specific rules to the common errors and then plan and execute remedial activities. It is the investigator's belief that the spoken language exerts a strong influence in the occurrence of errors. Thus, there must be enough oral drill in the correct pronunciations of these phonemes. Oral reading exercises must be given regularly. Spelling and dictation exercises should be given to enhance the students listening skills.

The teacher is the exemplary figure in the school. As such, the teacher must take great care in avoiding colloquial Tamil and speak with correct pronunciations. This would provide

the opportunity for the pupils to differentiate the different sounds.

Pupils should be encouraged to use the dictionary to find meanings of words. The habit of using dictionaries to find meanings of new words or difficult words would naturally build up the vocabulary of the individual.

This study shows, that in general, most of the errors committed are morphophonemic and synthesis errors involving grammar and spelling. Proper proof reading has not been done. Thus the editors and the proof-readers must take the blame for the systematic, performance and typo errors found in their newspapers.

A well planned curriculum with formal teaching of sufficient grammar and a lot of reading and writing exercises together with the availability of good Tamil reading materials are also essential to uplift the competence in Tamil learners.

A seminar or a short course on grammar conducted by modern grammarians from Tamil Nadu may help in correction of errors.

Standardization of Tamil grammar in Tamil Nadu must be done. Tamil scholars must be identified and requested to come to some form of consensus on the rules in grammar.

Exception to rules overlap and contradictions must be made known and consensus arrived at.

The editors should be given proper training and awareness. They should also be exposed to the correct form of the language as some of them are not professionals in the Tamil language. This exposure will make them more careful when they edit the errors.

The editors should also be more qualified and well versed in the Tamil language. They should take pride in error-free newspapers. Editors must come to terms with the fact that they are responsible for propagation of the Tamil language to a great extent and must be made answerable when errors appear in their newspapers.

The editors are entrusted with the responsibility of using the correct language and in this case Tamil. The editors have to be aware of the language areas, which are problematic and should be more careful. Even though the editors' responsibility is just to present the news to the public, they should always use the correct language. The investigator hopes that this study would help the editors to improve the competence in Tamil Language.

As said earlier the use of correct language begins in school. Thus the teacher is entrusted with the responsibility to

facilitate the students to acquire a good command of the Tamil Language. The teacher has to be aware of the language areas, which are problematic to the students and set out remedial measures to overcome the hazards. The teacher is a role model for the students and thus expected to use the standard Tamil in written and oral communication.

This study should give any learner of Tamil, especially in Malaysia, some light in the common types of errors generally committed by the Tamil newspapers. Being conscious of the types of errors, the journalists can be conscious of the errors and plan strategies to overcome them.

5.5 FURTHER RESEARCH

This research mainly considered errors committed in the three Tamil newspapers for period of one month. The articles were also taken at random and thus may not represent the whole paper. A detailed study of one daily may be an exhaustive one. This study is not done to prove that the newspapers are always using the wrong language but to alert the readers that the language used in the newspapers do have errors. This study is also aimed to enlighten the editors and journalists about the errors found

in their publications. It is hoped that we'll have error-free newspapers in the future.