CHAPTER 4

DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

4.0 INTRODUCTION
In this chapter, results from the Student’s Questionnaire (Appendix 1) will be presented. The results obtained from the analysis of errors gathered from the written tasks given to the subjects are also presented. Given the task, as stated in the previous chapter, the subjects had to construct a minimum of 25 sentences comprising a total of 200 words using all the contextual clues given. The subjects were given 45 minutes to complete the task. All the sentences constructed were marked and the errors analyzed. A few samples of the marked scripts are given in Appendix 3. The data collected was first analyzed at two levels – word and sentence levels. The errors at word level were identified and sub-divided into three categories, namely grammatical errors, lexical errors and spelling errors. Only grammatical errors made by the subjects are analysed as this is the focus of the study. The grammatical errors were further analyzed and the errors classified under the five word
classes of English grammar: verbs, articles, pronouns, preposition and conjunctions.

4.1 FINDINGS ABOUT SUBJECTS’ SES AND SLS FROM QUESTIONNAIRES

In this section, the researcher presents the analysis of data collected from the subjects’ questionnaires. The statistical analysis of data is presented in Appendix 4. The analysis is presented in a descriptive statistical form and gives information about the socio-economic and sociolinguistic status of the subjects’ parents under study, its significant correlation to the acquisition of the English language by the subjects in general, and specifically to the analysis of the grammatical errors.

4.1.1 Fathers’ Occupation

Figure 4.1.1 shows the descriptive statistical analysis of the subjects’ fathers’ occupation.
Figure 4.1.1
Descriptive Statistical Analysis of Father’s Occupation

Key
1.00 = Professionals
2.00 = Clerks/Typist/Technicians
3.00 = Small scale businessman
4.00 = Welder/Mechanic/Driver
5.00 = Odd job/Labourer

From the figure, it can be seen that 35% of the subjects’ fathers’ in this study are odd-job workers or labourers, 30% are welders, mechanics or drivers, 20% do small scale business, 10% are either clerks, typists or technicians and 5% of them are professionals.

4.1.2 Fathers’ Income.

Figure 4.1.2 shows the descriptive statistical analysis of the subjects’ fathers’ monthly income.
Figure 4.1.2

Descriptive Statistical Analysis of Fathers’ Income.

Key
1.00 = Less than RM500
2.00 = RM500 – RM999
3.00 = RM1000 – RM4999

From the above figure, the statistic shows that 60% of fathers earn between RM 500 and RM 999 a month, 20% earn a monthly income of below RM 500, while another 20% earn above RM 1000.

4.1.3 Mothers’ Occupation

Figure 4.1.3 shows the descriptive statistical analysis of the subjects’ mothers’ occupation.
From the figure, it is shown that 67% of the subjects' mothers are unemployed, 20% are odd job labourers, 7% do small scale business, 4% are professionals and 2% work as clerks or typists.

4.1.4 Mothers' Income

Figure 4.1.4 shows the analysis of the mother’s income.
As can be seen in the figure above, 67% of the subjects’ mothers have no income at all, 26% draw less than RM 500 while 7% draw an income of RM 500 – RM 999.

Based on the statistics of the parents’ occupation and income, it is clear that majority of the subjects come from low SES group. Their parents would not be able to spend a lot money on their children’s education. If their children are weak in certain subjects like English and need tuition or buy revision books to improve, these parents would most likely not be able to afford it.

4.1.5 Fathers’ Educational Level

Figure 4.1.5 shows the analysis of the fathers’ education.

**Figure 4.1.5**

Descriptive Statistical Analysis of Fathers’ Education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Father’s Education</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.00 = Degree</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.00 = Diploma</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.00 = Secondary</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.00 = Primary</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.00 = No education</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key

1.00 = Degree
2.00 = Diploma
3.00 = Secondary
4.00 = Primary
5.00 = No education
The figure above shows that about 50% of the subjects' fathers have only completed secondary level education, 25% have had only primary education, 12% have diplomas, 8% have no education while only 5% are degree holders.

4.1.6 Mothers' Educational Level

Figure 4.1.6 shows the educational level of the subjects' mothers.

**Figure 4.1.6**
Descriptive Statistical Analysis of Mothers' Education

It is shown that 56% have only been able to complete primary education, 18% have finished secondary level education, 3% have diplomas, and the other 3% are degree holders. It is rather shocking to note that 20% of the mothers do not have any formal education at all.
At this juncture, it is important to note that parents’ academic literacy plays an important role in their children’s English language learning. Parents should understand that learning a second language does not mean giving up one’s first language or dialect. Rather, it involves adding a new language to one’s repertoire. It is said that parents play an important role in a second language acquisition.

“Parental input into literacy and into general and specialist knowledge, especially in formal educational areas, offer significant support to the students. Moreover parents attitudes and verbal support for learning are highly influential even if parents have missed out on formal schooling.” (http://www.tki.org.nz/lt/esol/online/teachers/profread/factoraffect.php).

Support from home is an important factor in second language learning. Some educators believe that parents of English Language learners should speak in English at home (Recommendation made by Rodriguez, 1982). However, far more important than speaking English, parents should value both the native language and English. (http://www.cal.org/resources/digest/0005/contextual.html).

4.1.7 English Language Usage

Figure 4.1.7 shows the analysis of usage of English Language in communication in home environment, classrooms and in the neighbourhood.
It is evident that from figure 4.1.7, 32% of the subjects (16 out of 50) do not speak in English at all with their parents. Only 14% (7 out of 50) have stated that they always speak in English with their parents. 36% (18 out of 50) have stated that they always speak in English with their brothers and sisters, while 30% (15 out of 50) occasionally converse in English with their brothers and sisters. 66% of subjects (33 out of 50) have stated that they always speak in English in the classroom during the English lesson and 22% (11 out of 50) often, 6% (3 out of 50) occasionally and 2% (1 out of 50) do not speak at all in English with their English teachers. The figure also shows that only 46% of subjects (23 out of 50) often speak in English with their non-English teachers, and 18% (9 out of 50) do not converse at all in English with non-English teachers in school. A majority of them, 48% (24 out of 50) do not communicate in English at all with their neighbours. Thus
it is clear that the subjects only communicate in English with people who know the language.

The use of English to communicate reflects the subjects’ attitude towards the language. It is observed that students lack the confidence and are reluctant to speak in English often as they have the fear of making mistakes. It is found that the more confident the learners are in speaking English, the better they perform.

In addition, a knowledge of English may not be necessary for as a majority of ESL students in Malaysian schools are fully aware that they can survive well without having to know much English (Chandrasegaran, 1979). The Indian students more so in rural areas, can get by well by using their mother tongue. In addition, effective inter ethnic communication can be achieved using Bahasa Malaysia (Sathiadevi, 2000).

The researcher believes that a positive attitude is the key to success in the English Language. If learners are given the opportunity and purpose for the use of the language, with intrinsic motivation and given a supportive environment, communication in the language can occur.
4.1.8 Exposure to Media

Figure 4.1.8 shows how often students get exposed to the media in English.

Figure 4.1.8
Descriptive Statistical Analysis of Exposure to Media

Only the highest in rank is stated here and to be considered. 74% of subjects (37 out of 50) watch television daily. 40% of the subjects (20 out of 50) listen to the radio daily and 36% (18 out of 50) go for movies occasionally. According to some students who were interviewed, they liked watching cartoons and English movies on television. They listened to pop music and went only for box-office movies. As far as reading is concerned, 40% (20 out of 50) read newspapers daily, 40% (20 out of 50) read magazines or comics occasionally, and about 34% (17 out of 50) read books weekly.
The above analysis shows students’ exposure to English through various media. Based on the data gathered from the interview and questionnaire, the researcher feels that the students are in the right path of getting more and more exposure to English. However, it is still insufficient as shown in their performance in the written data.

4.1.9 English Language Learning

Figure 4.1.9 shows matters regarding English language learning.

Figure 4.1.9
Descriptive Statistical Analysis of English Language Learning

The figure shows that 74% of the subjects have stated that the writing skill is the most difficult while only 8% have stated it being the least difficult. 10% of the subjects feel reading is the most difficult while 20% have stated it is the least difficult. On matters regarding the speaking skill, only 8% have stated it is the most difficult while 50% feel reading is the least difficult.
Only 12% regard understanding English as the most difficult, and 26% have stated it as the least difficult.

As a teacher, the researcher has observed that students find writing difficult because it is a very complex skill. In writing, students first have to understand the subject matter and find the relevant information about the subject/topic. Next, the student needs to have a clear purpose for writing and how to present his/her ideas or information. All these complex steps are definitely governed by a good command of the language. A student also needs a repertoire of language adequate for writing. He needs to know a range of sentence patterns and words, appropriate choice of register, stylistic variants to express his/her ideas and knowledge. So language is the basis for good writing. Incompetence in the language results in poor, illegible erroneous writing.

4.1.10 **Difficult Components in Writing**

The figure 4.1.10 shows the analysis of difficult components in writing.
To matters regarding which components are difficult when writing in English, 74% of subjects (37 out of 50) have stated that grammar is the most difficult while 8% regard grammar as least difficult. 16% (8 out of 50) of subjects have stated vocabulary is the most difficult and 20% feel it the least difficult. 20% have stated that spelling is the most difficult. In writing, knowledge of grammar enables one to put words together in the correct order to communicate ideas and intentions. A student acquires the knowledge of grammar at various stages in his process of learning the language. The learning process can be enhanced by motivation, purposeful exposure and plenty of practice.

To the question, "when writing an English essay do you think in Tamil and then translate into English," 46% have said 'yes', 20% said 'no' and 24% said 'sometimes'. Basically this shows that literal translation is common in the writings of Tamil students.
Based on the data gathered from the questionnaire, the researcher, too, predicts that the socio-economic status and sociolinguistic level of students does affect their competence in the English language, and this, indirectly, affects the performance of students in writing.

4.2 FINDINGS FROM THE WRITTEN TASKS

In this section, the researcher presents the analysis of the sentences which showed that out of the 823 sentences produced, 495 or 60% were erroneous sentences. A sentence was determined erroneous if it contained grammatical errors pertaining to misselection, omission, addition or misordering of words, spelling errors or usage of wrong lexical item. Data was collected from 50 scripts (written task), excluding 4 scripts that were incomplete and 11 scripts that were unintelligible because of multiple word errors and blurred meaning. Example of an unintelligible script that used the contextual clues inappropriately is as follows:

'Ramlon fishing the nearby river a fishing rod and the pail. Sometimes is a lot of fish curry father very happy’

The percentage of erroneous sentences was calculated using the following formula:

\[
\frac{\text{No. of erroneous sentences}}{\text{No. of sentences constructed}} \times 100
\]
The percentage obtained was analyzed using the SPSS. The statistics of erroneous sentences is given in Appendix 5.

The percentage of errors at sentence level and word level are presented as follows:

4.2.1 Errors at Sentence Level

Figure 4.2.1 presents the percentage of erroneous sentences produced by the subjects.

Figure 4.2.1

Descriptive Statistical Analysis of Erroneous Sentences

A total of 823 sentences were produced, out of which 495 or 60% were erroneous, meaning they contained an error or more than one error. From the figure, 6 subjects produced 100% erroneous sentences. 9 subjects have produced 90% erroneous sentences. 10 subjects have produced 80% erroneous sentences. 4 of them have produced 70% erroneous sentences. Another 2 subjects have produced 60% erroneous sentences. 8 subjects
have produced 50% erroneous sentences. 2 of them produced 40% erroneous sentences. 5 subjects have produced 30% erroneous sentences, and finally 4 subjects have produced 20% erroneous sentences.

4.2.2 ERRORS AT WORD LEVEL

A total of 6326 words were produced from the 50 scripts. This is an average of 127 words per script. Analysis of the errors at word level revealed that out of the 6326 produced, 3122 words, or 49% were found to be errors. The errors were then classified under three main categories. Table 4.2.2 shows the distribution of the frequency and percentage of the errors.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>No. of Errors</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grammatical</td>
<td>1896</td>
<td>60.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lexical</td>
<td>1030</td>
<td>33.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spelling</td>
<td>196</td>
<td>6.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>3122</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Of the 3122 errors, 60.7 % was grammatical errors, followed by 33 % lexical and 6.3 % spelling errors. As the focus of the study is on grammatical errors, the researcher will limit her discussion within the parameters of her study.
4.3 GRAMMATICAL ERRORS

The grammatical errors identified were then classified under the basic word classes of English grammar namely, verb/verb phrase, prepositions, articles, pronouns, and conjunctions. These word classes were then categorized into the four error types: misselections, omissions, additions and misorderings as classified by Corder (1981). For this error analysis study, only five word classes with the most number of errors were taken into consideration. Thus, errors pertaining to nouns, adjectives and adverbs were not analyzed because they were given as contextual clues. Figure 4.3 below shows the type and frequency of errors in each word class.

Figure 4.3
Types and Frequency of Grammatical Errors

![Bar chart showing types and frequency of grammatical errors](chart.png)
Figure 4.3 shows the distribution of grammatical errors. The highest occurrence of errors was verb/verb phrase errors which made up 889 or 47% of the total number of grammatical errors, followed by article errors 336 or 18%, pronoun errors 295 or 16%, prepositions error 288 or 15% and the least, was conjunction errors 88 or 4%. All the errors under each word class are further analyzed under the various type and the sources of the errors are explained.

4.3.1 Misselection Errors

In this sub-section, the researcher presents the misselection type errors found in the data

Figure 4.3.1

Distribution and Frequency of Misselection Errors
Figure 4.3.1 presents the distribution and frequency of misselection errors. The figure shows that a total of 765 misselection type errors were produced. Of this 532 or 70% was verb/verb phrase errors, 108 or 14% was pronoun errors, 71 or 9% was prepositional errors, 38 or 5% was article errors and 16 or 2% was conjunction errors.

4.3.1.1 **Verb/Verb Phrase**

Errors pertaining to verb/verb phrase are sub-divided into tenses, subject-verb concord, full verb and verb ‘to be’. Erroneous sentences under each sub-division are listed below followed by possible sources.

**A. Tense Errors**

i. Simple Present tense for the Simple Past

*Yesterday my mother go to the market. (went)*

*During the last school holidays I visit my grandpa. (visited)*

Of the five contexts given for sentence construction in the writing task, two were based on past tense. One context began as ‘Yesterday my mother.......’ and the other ‘During the last school holidays.......’ Despite the past time adverbial *Yesterday* and *During the last*, which indicate something had happened in the past, learners have used present tense verbs in the above sentences.
* She **cook** fish curry and vegetables for lunch. (cooked)

* Grandpa **give** some money and I **buy** a dictionary. (gave, bought)

* I **help** my grandpa to sell the fruits. (helped)

Similarly the sentences above indicate a situation wholly completed in the past and to use the present tense verb is incorrect.

**ii. Simple Past for Simple Present tense**

* Everyday they **cycled** to school. (cycle)

* Ramli **went** fishing everyday. (goes)

* I always help my grandpa **sold** the fruits. (sell)

The adverbials *everyday* and *always* are indicators of present habitual or routine, thus, the verbs in the above sentences should be in the present tense.

**iii. Simple Present Tense for Future Tense**

* Tomorrow my mother and I are **go** to Singapore. (going)

* We will be **visit** my uncle. (visiting)

Similarly, ignorance of the future indicators *tomorrow* and *will* have resulted in erroneous sentences as shown in the above sentences.

The use of the simple present for the simple past tense or vice-verse and simple present tense for the future tense can be attributed to redundancy.
reduction which is a strategy of overgeneralization. Learners create a deviant structure on the basis of his/her own experience of the structure in the target language. Students may have considered it to be unnecessary to change the tense of the verb because of the presence of the past time adverbial, yesterday, present tense indicator always and everyday and future adverbial tomorrow.

iv. Inconsistency between Present tense and Past

* Yesterday my mother went to market and she buy some vegetables.(bought)

* Ramli goes fishing and sometimes he caught a lot of fish.(catches)

The inconsistency of tenses in the above sentences could be attributed to over-generalization. In the above sentences, students have unconsciously ignored the tense used in the first part of the sentence. Thus, when they combine two ideas occurring with the same time reference using a conjunction, an inconsistency between tenses occurs.

Another reason why students have committed numerous errors in the use of verb tense can be attributed to the consequences of flawed communicative strategy. Most learners make grammatical errors in conversation because of spontaneity and ignorance of grammar rules. Errors arising from circumstances of speech do not occur in any systematically categorised
form. Thus, learners have the tendency to write as how and what they speak, which leads to errors.

Another source that can be traced to the errors made in the verb tense is the interference or negative transfer which causes the negative influence of the mother tongue on the performance of the target language learners (Lado, 1957). In the Tamil language, there are no irregular verbs such as \textit{went, bought, sold} etc. Below are sentences that will show that there are no irregular verbs in Tamil.

Yesterday she \textit{went} to school. In Tamil Neatru aval padasalai \textit{sendraal}.

Everyday she \textit{goes} to school. In Tamil Aandradum aval padasalai \textit{selgiraal}.

(In Tamil, the words \textit{sendraal} and \textit{selgiraal} have the same root, which is \textit{sel}.)

\textbf{B. Subject – Verb Concord Errors}

The subject-verb concord errors are the next most common verb error made by students in the misselection verb errors. From the analysis of the students’ performance, it is clear that many of them have selected the wrong verb to match the subject in a sentence. Below are some erroneous sentences in this category.

* Raju and Lim \textit{is} close friends. (are)

* My cousins \textit{likes} me very much. (like)

* They \textit{cycles} to school. (cycle)
* He like fishing. (likes)

The above erroneous sentences show the failure of the students to mark the third person singular verb in the simple present tense resulting in subject-verb concord errors. The first three sentences are incorrect because the third person plural subject requires a plural verb, and not a singular verb. In the fourth sentence, the singular subject ‘He’ should have a singular verb ‘likes’. Thus, the above sentences do not show concord between the subject and the verb.

The occurrence of subject-verb concord errors can also be attributed to a strategy of over-generalization that is reducing linguistic burden. With the omission of the third person -s, over-generalization removes the necessity for concord, thus relieving the learner of considerable efforts (Richards 1974a). According to Richards, generalization can be seen as a form of simplification. Simplification strategies consist of attempts by learners to ease the burden of learning and facilitate communication.

The errors pertaining to subject verb concord could be due to strategies accounting to negative L1 transfer which is Tamil. In Tamil, there is no distinctive morphological change in the verb form to agree with the subject. The verb is always in the root form and it is inflected to show gender, tense,
person and plurality. Some examples in English and the Tamil translation are stated below.

He goes fishing everyday. In Tamil Avaan meen piddikka pooggiran.

She goes fishing In Tamil Avval meen piddikka pooggiral.

They go fishing. In Tamil Avarrgal meen piddikka pooggirargal.

The verb form in Tamil clearly distinguishes the singular or plural subject.

C. Full verb error

The data shows that errors have derived from the selection of wrong past tense verb form. The following are list of errors:

* My mother taked a taxi home. (took)

* She buved some vegetables and fish. (bought)

* I goed to my grandpa’s house. (went)

The above sentences are erroneous because of the wrong formation of the past tense verbs. The correct verb form should be irregular past tense form as given in the brackets. These errors appear to be systematic and students seem to have over-generalized the rule for the conjugation of the regular
past tense form to irregular past tense form by adding the -ed marker to the base verbs.

These errors could also be attributed to intralingual confusion whereby students have hypothesized false concepts about the L2 verb-system similar to those usually established by children in their initial stages of mother tongue acquisition.

Similarly, misselection of full verbs also resulted in collocational errors. The errors are illustrated in the following sentences.

* She made fish curry and vegetables for lunch. (cooked)

* Tomorrow my mother and I are going to Singapore to see my uncle. (visit)

A collocation is a word that is often used with other words (James, 1998). A collocational error is the result of word correspondence which is inappropriate despite the fact that the meaning intended is obvious (Sheena 2000).

Errors of this kind can also be traced to false concepts hypothesized. This is another class of development errors which derive from faulty comprehension of distinction in the target language (Richards, 1971b). The use of made for cook, and see for visit are examples of substitution that
derives from confusion. Students often perceive that members of such pairs are synonyms.

Another misselection type full verb error noticed in the analysis of task was wrong spelling of verbs. The following are some examples.

* I help my grandpa to **cell** the fruits. (sell)
* She went to the market to **by** fish and vegetables. (buy)
* My uncle **leaves** in Singapore. (lives)

In the erroneous sentences above the words **cell**, **by** and **leaves** cannot be considered as spelling errors alone because when the same words were used in another context the words were spelt correctly. The usage of the words **by** instead of **buy**, **cell** instead of **sell** and **leaves** instead of **lives** are probably due to confusion and made through haste than through actual ignorance. They are also described as unsystematical errors. They are slips of the tongue or pen caused purely by psychological conditions, such as intense excitement, or physiological factors, such as tiredness. Errors under these circumstances are **ipso facto** unsystematic. From the pedagogic point of view, one may usefully dismiss them as ‘mistakes’ (Richards, 1974b).
These errors may also be derived from faulty pronunciation. The learners have spelt the words *lives, sell* and *buy* according to their pronunciation and given responses like *cell, by* and *leaves*.

**D. Auxiliary Verbs**

Examples of erroneous sentences due to misselection of auxiliary verbs are as follows:

a. My uncle *have* two sons and a daughter. (has)

b. When they *has* free time they play football with the village boys. (have)

c. My grandpa *have* an orchard. (has)

d. My mother and I *shall* be going to Singapore. (will)

e. My grandpa and I *am* going to sell the fruits. (are)

The use of ‘have’ with singular nouns and ‘has’ with a plural noun, indicates learners’ failure to observe rule restrictions. Similarly students know that the future tense, *I shall* and *I am*, is correct but have over-generalized this knowledge with the plural subject.

Failure to use the auxiliary may be due to mother tongue influence. In the Tamil language, the noun form is inflected with a suffix to distinguish its plural or singular form, and the suffix denotes the meaning of the verb. Thus, when literal translation from Tamil to English takes place, learners get
confused and overgeneralise on the basis that ‘have’ and ‘has’ mean the same.

The following sentences in Tamil and their translation illustrate this fact.

a. Tamil sentence: Avaneedam oru kar ullathu.
   
   Translation: He a car has

   English sentence: He has a car..

b. Tamil sentence: Avarggaleedam oru kar ullathu.
   
   Translation: They a car has

   English sentence: They have a car.

   (The suffix *eedam* denotes have and has)

4.3.1.2 Pronouns

Misselection of pronouns was confined to personal pronouns and possessive pronouns as the context of the written task limits the use of other pronouns.

Below are some erroneous sentences pertaining to pronouns.

* Their my cousins. (They are)

* Their friendly and kind. (They are)

* Our cousins are friendly and kind.(My)

* He’s father feels happy. (His)

* Mine uncle’s house is near Changi Airport. (My)
Some selections of pronouns in the above sentences can be described as sub-vocalization or phonological transposition whereby the written output of learners is inclined to their pattern of speech. The use of *their* instead of *they are* and *he's* instead of *his* could be because of synonymous pronunciation.

Most of the errors involving pronouns are attributable to mother tongue influence. In Tamil, there are personal pronouns but the use of these is governed by factors such as age, relationship, gender and status. The root word is inflected to show this. When faced with the limited options of the English pronouns, Tamil speakers may hesitate and be unsure of which pronouns to use. The masculine and feminine third-person pronouns are mixed up because of the high-context nature in Tamil. In Tamil we use:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{avan and evan for he} & & \text{avannathu for his} \\
\text{aval and eval for she} & & \text{avallathu for hers} \\
\text{avar and iver for she/he} & & \text{avargallathu for theirs}
\end{align*}
\]

Tamil speakers are also fond of using the pronouns *yeen* (my) and *namma* (our) interchangeably.

4.3.1.3 Prepositions

Errors in prepositions are also common in the analysis. The common prepositions found in the data collected are categorized under prepositions of time, place and miscellaneous. Prepositions of time are: *for, about, during* and prepositions of place are: *at, to, in, from* and *near.*
Miscellaneous prepositions are which denote neither time nor place. They are not only preceded by noun phrases or verb phrases but also by adverbs or adjectives. Prepositions under this category are, *with, by, to, from, about.*

Basically prepositions cause problems for most non-native speakers because prepositions can sometimes be used interchangeably as in *'He sat on a chair*’ and *'He sat in a chair’.* Prepositions are often combined with verbs to form phrasal verbs as in *‘to look at someone’, ‘to look after someone’.* Moreover, a single preposition may also be used to express several different ideas as in: *'He is tall for his age’; ‘He swam for an hour’. *

Many studies of the English prepositions have emphasized the difficulties of the English prepositional usage for all non-native speakers. There is a general consensus among teachers of English as a foreign language concerning the difficulty of prepositions.

Below are some examples of erroneous sentences based on prepositions of the misselection type.

* In their free time the boys play football with the village boys. (During)

* I stayed there about a few days. (for )

* They go for school.(to)

* I used the money for buy a dictionary. (to)
* There are many fruit trees at the orchard. (in)
* They play football with the village boys in the nearby field. (at)
* My mother went in bus.(by)
* I bought a dictionary by that money. (with)
* I help my grandpa for sell the fruits. (to)

The erroneous sentences above are attributable to the students' ignorance of L2 rules i.e. the application of English prepositions to contexts where they do not apply.

Learners who have learnt sentence patterns such as, 'In the evening....', '... at the river', may use the prepositions 'in' and 'at' respectively in other contexts such as, 'In their free time...' and 'at the orchard'. The learners, encountering a particular preposition with one type of situation, attempt by analogy to use the same preposition with similar situations.

Misselection of prepositions can also be traced to L1 interference. In Tamil, postpositions are used instead of prepositions. Tamil postpositions have been explained in Chapter III.

In Tamil when the locative postposition ill or le is affixed to the noun stem 'maram' (tree) it becomes marattile (in the tree) or marathill
(on the tree). Hence, learners who are not sure of English prepositions tend to literally translate from Tamil:

*Amma bassile sendrall* becomes *Mother went in bus.*

Similarly, dative postposition –*ukku* or *ykki* as in *vittukku* means- to the house and *ammavukku* means- for mother. In Tamil, *ukku* can be used to denote to and for. Thus, we get responses such as:

*Naan vittukku ponen* becomes *I went for home* instead of *I went home*

4.3.1.4 **Article Errors**

Articles which are one of the simplest word classes in English grammar seem to pose a problem to Tamil speakers. Learners have failed to understand or are rather confused as to when to use the correct indefinite article, definite article and zero article.

Below are examples of the erroneous sentences found in the data.

* He has a orchard.(an)
* My grandpa has the orchard.(an)
* My uncle’s house is near a Changi Airport.(the)
* She goes to a market everyday. (the)
* He has a fishing rod and the pail. (a)
* My uncle’s house is in the Singapore. (Ø)
The errors in the first two sentences are the same as the learners have selected the indefinite article ‘a’ instead of ‘an’. The third and fourth sentences should have a definite article ‘the’ instead of ‘a’. Similarly, in the last sentence, learners have selected the definite article instead of an indefinite article.

From the development aspect, the main reason attributable to errors in the use of articles is ignorance of rule restrictions. Articles in English are invariable. That is they do not change to the gender of a noun they refer to. The definite article ‘the’ should be used to refer to something which has already been mentioned or when both the speaker and listener know what is being talked about. If learners had internalized these rules, their responses would be

‘the Changi Airport’ and not ‘a Changi Airport’
‘to the market’ and not ‘to a market’

Similarly learners have not grasped the rule that the indefinite article ‘a’ should be used with consonants and before the ‘u’ and ‘eu’ sound, and ‘An’ with vowels and before a ‘h’ mute. There are also circumstances in which no article is needed like with names of countries. Thus learners have made errors like ‘the Singapore’.
4.3.1.5 **Conjunctions**

Some of the erroneous sentences that have resulted from the misselection of conjunctions in the data are given below:

* I like to eat fish with vegetables. (and)

- * As she reached home, she cooked fish curry with cabbage for lunch. (When, and)

The above sentences show that the learners have selected the wrong conjunction to join two ideas. Errors in misselection of conjunctions are evidence of intralingual which has to do with false concepts hypothesized. These errors could have derived from faulty comprehension of distinctions in the target language. The phrase ‘bread with butter’, for example, may be interpreted to be ‘fish with vegetable’ and ‘fish curry with cabbage’.

4.3.2 **Omission Errors**

In this section, the researcher presents the omission type errors found in each word class.
Figure 4.3.2. Distribution and Frequency of Omission Errors

Figure 4.3.2 shows that a total of 847 omission errors were gathered from the data. Of this, the verb errors are in the highest rank with 282 or 33%. This is followed by 238 or 28% article errors, 147 or 17% pronoun errors, 120 or 14% prepositional errors and the least were conjunction errors which made up of 8%.

4.3.2.1 Verbs / Verb Phrases

A. Tenses

Verb tense and verb form problems are probably the most common grammatical errors in second language learning. A lot of attention is placed in the order of events such as what happened first, what happened before
that, what is happening now and what will happen later. Thus, learners, especially non-native speakers, face problems in changing the verb tense according to these events and find the easy way out by omitting the verb tense.

Below are some erroneous sentences attributed by omission of verb tense in a past tense context.

* My mother **cook** fish curry. (cooked).
* I **help** my grandpa to sell the fruits. (helped)
* He **use** a fishing rod.(used)
* We **visit** my uncle in Singapore. (visited)

The omission of the **-ed** marker is attributable to overgeneralization which may cause redundancy reduction. Students may have felt that adding -ed marker was not necessary since the past tense was already indicated with the word ‘Yesterday’.

Students’ intention in omitting the **-ed** marker could be a type of simplification of task attributed to phonological reasons. Very often the **-ed** marker in regular past tense verb is not pronounced when spoken and it does not cause any communication problem.
B. Auxiliary Verbs

Examples of erroneous sentences found in the data that are due to omission of verbs in the present tense context are as follows:

* My mother and I ▲ going to Singapore. (are)

* My uncle’s house ▲ near Changi Airport. (is)

* Raju and Lim ▲ neighbours. (are)

* There ▲ many fruit trees in the orchard. (are)

* They ▲ close friends. (are)

Omission of verbs to be has become common in daily L2 speech where we find learners oversimplifying a sentence but the meaning of which may still be understandable. For further clarification below are some questions and responses from learners, gathered by the researcher, during an oral assessment session carried out in her class.

i. Who are your friends? Ravi and Ram my friends.

ii. Where is your house? My house near SS 19.

iii. What do you do after school? I going to the library.

These kinds of ungrammatical responses are regarded as the learner’s strategies of production. Strategies of production relate to the simplification of L2 knowledge, i.e. the learner relies on acquired knowledge to communicate. The learner tries to simplify the task, and thus, errors may be
generated. The strategy identified here is linguistic simplification (http://life.unvifcomte.fr/RECHERCHE/p7/pub/washing.htm).

This production strategy is now deployed in formal writing in schools. Learners are further influenced by internet chat and the SMS messaging system which encourage the minimizing of sentences.

Learners have failed to learn more complex structures and develop the rules required to produce acceptable utterances. The learner finds he/she can achieve effective communication by using relatively simple rules.

The omission of auxiliaries in sentences may also be attributable to the interference of the Tamil language. In the Tamil language, there are no auxiliaries like am, is, was, are and were. Hence, Tamil learners tend to omit auxiliaries when they write in English. Some examples are as follows:

a. Tamil sentence : Ammaum naanum Singapur poggirum.
   Translation : Mother and I Singapore going to.
   English sentence : Mother and I are going to Singapore.

b. Tamil sentence : En maamavin viddu Changi Airport aruggil.
   Translation : My uncle’s house Changi Airport near.
   English sentence : My uncles’s house is near Changi Airport.
C. Full Verb

It was rather surprising to note that some learners have still not grasped the basic English vocabulary. Learners’ responses show their uncertainty and hesitation in giving the correct response. Some erroneous sentences are as follows:

* Ramli goes fishing at the nearby river. (goes)

* They cycle to school by cycle. (cycle)

* He uses a fishing rod and a pail. (uses)

The above sentences show that the learners may have faced difficulty in getting the appropriate verbs to complete the sentences. Thus, omitting them is unavoidable. Though the verbs are omitted, the meaning of the sentences can be deduced. Thus, this is basically a communication strategy whereby the learner has been able to express the meaning even though he faces difficulty in getting the correct verb.

4.3.2.2 Articles

Omission of articles in the following sentences has led to errors. Some examples are as follows:

* Ramli goes fishing at the nearby river. (a)

* I use the money to buy a dictionary. (a)

* They play football with the village boys. (the)

* My grandpa has an orchard. (an)
In the sentences above, learners have omitted the articles as a simplification strategy. The above erroneous sentences, however, may also be attributable to mother tongue influence. In the Tamil language, there is no definite or indefinite article before a noun, and this may have led to omission of articles by the learners when literal translation is done.

In Tamil the words ‘orr’ and ‘oru’ is used to denote one, the quantity, but they do not function as English articles in sentence construction. Below are some examples to further illustrate this.

i. Tamil sentence: *Ramli arrugill ulla aattrukku meen pidikke sellvaan.*
   
   Translation : Ramli nearby river fish catch going.
   
   English sentence: Ramli is going fishing at a nearby river.

There is no need for the word ‘orr’ + *aattrukku* to denote ‘a river’.

Moreover in Tamil, many nouns referring to people take a plural suffix that can vary depending on degree of respect. Usually though, the context makes the plurality clear so the noun goes unmarked. This is also the case for nouns that do not refer to people. Because this distinction between count and uncountable is not recognized, number and count ability pose major problem for Tamil speakers (Sankaran, 2000).
In the following sentence ‘My grandpa has … orchard’, it could be that the learner is unsure as to whether the word ‘orchard’ is a countable or uncountable noun, and thus omits the article ‘an’.

The text below is another sample taken from the data that shows the systematical use of articles.

* During the school holidays I went to my grandpa’s house. My grandpa has an orchard. Orchard is near the house and there are many fruit trees. (The) I help my grandpa to pick fruits and sell them. (The) My grandpa gave me money. I bought a dictionary using money. (a, the)

The above sample of the learners’ writing is an example of indeterminacy (Jain, 1974). Jain refers indeterminacy to an inconsistency or uncertainty in handling a linguistic item. There is no apparent rule-governed consistency with which the articles are applied or missed. This indicates that students have no firm generalization for the use of the articles in English.

4.3.2.3 Pronouns

Omission of pronouns makes up 17% of the total number of omission errors.

Some examples are as follows:

* Tomorrow my mother and I are going to uncle’s house. (my)

* Uncle has two daughter and a son (My)

* During free time they play football. (their)
In the following sentence ‘My grandpa has ... orchard’, it could be that the learner is unsure as to whether the word ‘orchard’ is a countable or uncountable noun, and thus omits the article ‘an’.

The text below is another sample taken from the data that shows the systematical use of articles.

* During the school holidays I went to my grandpa’s house. My grandpa has an orchard. Orchard is near the house and there are many fruit trees. (The) I help my grandpa to pick fruits and sell them. (The) My grandpa gave me money. I bought a dictionary using money. (a, the)

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4.3.2.3 Pronouns

Omission of pronouns makes up 17% of the total number of omission errors.

Some examples are as follows:

* Tomorrow my mother and I are going to uncle’s house. (my)

* Uncle has two daughter and a son (My)

* During free time they play football. (their)
* Sometimes he catches a lot of fish and his father will be happy.

Learners have omitted the personal pronoun 'my' in the first two sentences and the possessive pronoun 'their' and 'his' in the next two respective sentences. This could be because of the presence of the subject form 'uncle' in the first two sentences, and the pronouns 'they' and 'he' in the next two sentences.

This kind of error is the result of a learning strategy of simplification that can be attributed to communication strategy. The learners have come to know that if they worry too much about grammatical processes, their speech will not be fluent and, hence, native speakers might not have the patience to hear them through. Besides, learners could have felt that they can still communicate efficiently following this strategy.

4.3.2.4. Prepositions

Omission type errors pertaining to prepositions make up 14% of the total number of omission errors. Some examples found in the data are illustrated below.

* Free time they play football with the village boys. (During their)

* I stayed in grandpa’s house a week. (for)

* My mother and I went to my uncle’s house. (to)
* They play football at the nearby field.
* I help sell the fruits to
* My mother went to the market.

From the interlingual transfer aspect, the above sentences can be related to colloquial and spoken Tamil where there is no need for a preposition, and, hence, when the Tamil ESL learners write in English, they have omitted the preposition in the sentences.

Tamil sentence : Ammaum naanum maama viddu sendrom.
Translation : Mother and I uncle house went.
English sentence : My mother and I went to uncle’s house.

When literally translated into English ‘to’ is omitted.

Thus, it is clear that the learners’ tendency to literally translate from spoken Tamil to English has caused the omission of certain prepositions in their sentences.

From the intralingual aspect, the errors can be attributed to incomplete application of rules by the learners. L2 learners have failed to realize that the omission of preposition in the sentences has caused redundancy. The L2 learner, interested perhaps primarily in communication, feels that he can achieve communication without the need for the use of prepositions.
4.3.2.5 Conjunctions

Errors pertaining to omission of conjunctions make up 7% of the total number of omission errors. Some sample erroneous sentences taken from the data are as follows:

* She cooked fish curry, ∨ fried cabbage for lunch. (and)

* My uncle also has two sons, ∨ a daughter and they are friendly. (and)

* My cousins are friendly, ∨ kind. (and)

The students have omitted the conjunctions but have included a comma in place of a conjunction. The students have failed to observe rule restrictions and have applied rules to context where they do not apply.

4.3.3 Addition Errors

Figure 4.3.3 shows that a total of 245 addition errors were gathered from the data.

![Figure 4.3.3](image)

**Figure 4.3.3**

**Distribution and Frequency of Addition Errors**
Of this the prepositional errors are in the highest rank with 95 or 39%. This is followed by 64 or 26% verb errors, 60 or 24% article errors, 14 or 6% pronoun errors and the least are conjunction errors which make up 12 or 5%.

4.3.3.1 Prepositions

The highest frequency of addition errors was found in the addition of prepositions. The following sentences were found in the data where unnecessary English prepositions were incorrectly inserted.

* My mother came back to home.

* My grandpa has an orchard in there.

* Ramli goes to fishing every week.

* My mother took a taxi to home.

* My uncle’s house is near to Changi Airport.

In the above sentences, the learners have incorrectly added the prepositions ‘in’ and ‘to’. Learners have failed to realize that there is no need for a preposition in the above sentences.

The errors in the sentences above are clear evidence that learners have some misconception regarding the use of prepositions. In English, when ‘home’ is used alone, the preposition ‘to’ is never placed before it; e.g. go home, got home, return home (Thomson & Martinet, 1992). But when it is followed by any descriptive word or phrase, then the preposition ‘to’ cannot be omitted;
e.g. She went to her home. Hence the errors ‘to home’, ‘at there’ and ‘to fishing’ may have been caused by an analogy with the pattern ‘went/ came back to school’

Another aspect the researcher would like to relate the above errors to is transfer of training which derives from the teaching and learning process in the classroom, where learners would have generalized the patterns. Teaching and learning problems occur when teachers either fail to transfer the correct patterns or concepts (meaning) to the students or do not stress and emphasize collocational patterns, involving prepositions. Thus, learners do not grasp such concepts properly.

Error of the above type may also be traced to mother tongue influence. When literal translation, confusion arises between Tamil postposition and English preposition. It is noticed that when the Tamil context is translated to English learners make wrong responses accordingly as illustrated below:

Tamil sentence : En amma vittukku vanthal.

Translation : My mother to home came.

English sentence : My mother came home.

The word ‘vittukku’ when translated becomes ‘to home’. Thus, the preposition ‘to’ is inserted where it is not necessary.
as in the first three sentences. In the fourth sentence, ‘the’ is inserted before an adjective.

From the developmental aspect, the main reason attributable to errors in the addition of articles is ignorance of rule restrictions. Articles in English are invariable. That is they do not change to the gender of a noun they refer to. The definite article ‘the’ should be used to refer to something which has already been mentioned or when both the speaker and listener know what is being talked about. If learners had internalized these rules, their responses would be correct.

4.3.3.4 Pronouns

Addition of pronouns constitutes 14% of the total number of addition errors. The following sentences are erroneous because of insertion of pronouns where they are not necessary.

* My grandpa, his orchard has many fruit trees.

* Raju and Lim, they cycle to school.

* My mother and I, we went to the market.

In the above sentences, learners have inserted the pronoun ‘his’ to indicate ‘my grandpa’, ‘they’ represents Raju and Lim and ‘we’ refers to ‘mother and I’. These kinds of errors may be attributable to confusion or simplification.
All the above sentences could be the result of a learning strategy of simplification that attributes to a communication strategy. Selinker (1992) claims that, because of past experience, the learners have come to know that if they worry too much about grammatical processes their speech would not be fluent and, hence, native speakers might not have the patience to hear them through. Besides, learners could have felt that they can still communicate efficiently following this strategy.

4.3.3.5 Conjunctions

The sentences below are considered erroneous because of addition of conjunctions where they are not necessary.

* She took a taxi and come home.
* When during their free time they play football.
* They are friendly and so kind.

In the above examples, the students have added conjunctions at structures where they are not needed. Here again students have ignored rule restrictions and have produced erroneous sentences.

It is interesting to note that the conjunction ‘and’ is redundantly used by the students as in the following examples.

* My cousins are friendly and kind and to me.
* My mother cooked fish curry and vegetables and for lunch.
The erroneous sentences above are due to direct translation from Tamil. In Tamil, there is no one word that stands on its own for the conjunction ‘and’. The morpheme ‘uum’ is used as a suffix to denote the meaning ‘and’. So, a sentence in Tamil, when translated in English, reads:

Tamil sentence :  En amma meen kariuum kiraiuum mathia unnavukku samaithar.

Translation : My mother fish curry and vegetable and cooks for lunch.

English sentence : My mother cooked fish curry and vegetables for lunch.

Students have inserted the conjunction ‘and’ where it is not necessary as in, ‘vegetable and’

4.3.4 Misordering Errors

Figure 4.3.4 shows the number of misordering errors gathered from the data.

Figure 4.3.4
Distribution and Frequency of Misordering Errors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of Misordering Errors</th>
<th>MPRONOUN</th>
<th>MVERB</th>
<th>MPREPOS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sum</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

115
A total of 39 misordering errors were identified in the data. Of this 26 or 67% was due to misordering of pronouns, followed by 11 or 28% of verbs and finally 2 or 5% of errors due to misordering of preposition.

Misordering of pronouns was the most frequent, followed by verbs and prepositions. The data analyzed revealed that misordering or wrong sequencing of words in the sentence structure resulted in erroneous sentences. Some erroneous sentences pertaining to pronouns, verbs and prepositions are discussed below:

* I and my mother will visit my uncle. (My mother and I)

* They go to school by cycle. (They cycle to school)

* Mother fish curry cook. (My mother cooked fish curry)

* My mother taxi came home.(My mother came home by taxi.)

* I dictionary buy with that money.(I bought a dictionary with that money.)

The second sentence shows that the learner must have misunderstood the meaning of the word ‘cycle’ to be ‘bicycle’. The word ‘bicycle’ if translated in Tamil will be ‘cycle’. The other sentences are erroneous because of direct translation from the Tamil language. Another example of error due to direct translation from Tamil is as follows:
Tamil sentence : Amma meen karri samaithar.
Translation : Mother fish curry cooked.
English sentence : Mother cooked fish curry

The basic structure of a sentence in Tamil is 'Subject-Object-Verb' as opposed to 'Subject-Verb-Object' in English. Thus, erroneous sentences were produced by learners when the sentences were constructed based on Tamil structure as in the following example:

Tamil sentence : En amma texiyil veettukku vanthar.
Translation : (subject) (object) (verb + noun)
My mother taxi came home
(subject) (object) (verb + noun)

As seen in the example above, it is clear that, learners have used the Tamil sentence structure to construct sentences in English. This is a clear example of misordering error.

4.4 CONCLUSION
In this chapter, the researcher discussed the various types of errors and their sources. She also analyzed the SES and SLS of the subjects to show how these two factors have influenced the acquisition of English language by the subjects.
The written data analysed revealed that the learners had made numerous errors, especially in grammar which made up nearly 70% of the total errors. These errors derived from the learners failure to acquire the knowledge of English grammar rules, word order, forms and functions and exceptions to rules resulted in developmental errors.

Analysis also revealed that many learners were dependent on literal translation from their mother tongue, i.e. the Tamil language. Learners who literally translated their ideas from Tamil to English tended to follow the rules of that particular language resulting in interlingual errors.

Grammatical errors were also attributable to the students’ incompetence of the target language. The background of students based on their socio-economic status and sociolinguistic level of parents was analysed and it was predicted that the SES and SLS status of students affected their competence of the English language. This indirectly affects their performance in writing attributing to grammatical errors.

Hence, in conclusion, the errors analysed can be traced to mother tongue interference and difficulty of the target language.