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The Effects of Mother Tongue Interference among ESL Learners' Speaking Skills

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Abstract

This study is on the effects of mother tongue interference among ESL learners' speaking skills. This study investigates mother tongue interference in speaking skills among ESL learners and identifies challenges ESL learners face in acquiring speaking skills. The methodology includes both quantitative and qualitative methods. A questionnaire survey was conducted among the students from a high school in the Kinta valley district. The data was analyzed using SPSS version 23 for statistical analysis. A semi-structured interview was conducted to identify the challenges high school students face. The findings revealed that there is evidence of interference of the mother tongue on their speaking skills. Students faced several challenges, such as a lack of vocabulary knowledge and limited exposure to speaking the language. Hence, these findings will assist ESL instructors in a multilingual environment. The study recommends that future researchers use a bigger sampling size to see if mother tongue interference affects other skills.

Keywords: First Language, Mother Tongue, Interference, Speaking Skills, Second Language Acquisition, ESL Learner

Introduction

Language is a signal of communication and expression among humans incorporated with different techniques (Blakeley, 2021). Since English is known as the lingua franca; dominating other languages; it has a significant influence in various aspects in terms of objective, duration of the language, age and inspiration of acquiring. Knowing that English strongly influences the mother tongue, it is difficult to have a standardized language. The component which is quite visible when there is mother tongue interference is grammar. Improper proficiency in language will cause the entire language to be distorted (Noviyenty et al., 2020). This is apparent in reading, speaking and writing. A direct translation can also be one of the contributing factors.

According to past studies, an individual learns the parent language from birth. It is difficult to get rid of the influence of the mother tongue. Students also feel inferior because of their

mother tongue influence. Non-native speakers are not capable of communicating efficiently and effectively. Second language learners tend to transfer everything from their mother tongue to the second language. The learners translate the target language into their mother tongue and speak only in the parent language. Those learners find speaking in the target language difficult because they lack practice in a second language. The students may interact only in their regional language during school hours. This may cause trouble in learning a target language. From birth, the child starts to acquire things by listening to the parents in the language they speak. The impact and focus of regional language overshadow the learning of English. The students learn the English language at their school level but cannot produce sentences without error.

Mother tongue interference is patented when a person is bilingual, which can be seen as a problem. Looking at the Tamil language as a good example, 'I first eat' as in the English translation will be I eat first. In a correctly structured sentence, it should be I would like to eat. We do not unnecessarily place a sequence time frame on something that we desire to do.

Students cannot speak fluently without borrowing their own language into the language acquired. They tend to switch codes or use direct translation in a sentence due to the heavy influence of their native language. Possible reasons could be that they use their mother tongue in daily conversation. English is only being used for official reasons in school. According to Rahayu et al.; 2021 the interference is apparent in three aspects: phonetic, lexical and grammar (Foster Journal of English Language Teaching and Learning). Therefore, the possibility of interference could be high as they are irresistible to their native language.

Due to the rapid growth of international schools, many students tend to learn other languages besides their first language. Having a good foundation in their mother tongue assists in the understanding of the rudimentary English language. Therefore, it is significant for the young to sustain their first language as they pick a second language.

Emphasizing mother tongue in education refers to bringing the language spoken among family to the classroom, which incorporates the language taught in school. For those parents living abroad or having the experience of working abroad, their children would be bilingual. In this case, the child could have two mother tongues as their familiarity in both is equal. Nonetheless, this is uncommon as in most scenarios, one language will dominate the other. This study involves only a small number of students, which is only 30, within a high school in Pengkalan Ipoh. Generally, the research is only focusing on the aspect of speaking. Besides, the limitation in words may also lead them to use their mother tongue with fewer options. This study may involve only a few students. Those with good proficiency and using other languages will not encounter these problems. There will be circumstances where a minority of students have mastered the English language since childhood or inherited it from their parents ergo, they have good fluency in English.

Research Question

1. How does mother tongue interference affect speaking skills among ESL learners?
2. What are the challenges faced in acquiring speaking skills?

Literature Review

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)

Communicative competence is essential in language education because it emphasizes effective communication. This corresponds to language's primary function as a tool for

communication (Seong, 2007). Students can communicate with family members, friends, and the community to meet their needs and acquire knowledge, skills, information, values, ideas, and social relationships in everyday life through this primary function of language (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2013). If this function is not planned, language PdP is nothing more than learning language formulas that are unrelated to their use context. One of the most recent approaches to teaching Malay is the communicative approach. This approach emphasizes language use rather than knowledge alone (Wilkins, 1976; Widdowson, 1978; Widdowson, 2009; Littlewood, 1985; Juriah et al., 1992). In other words, this approach broadens the concept of language learning by emphasizing that language knowledge includes knowledge of language rules and how to apply those rules appropriately in the context of communication. These two components of language knowledge are stated by Zulkifley (2012) as grammar components and grammar components, while Juriah (2010) named them as language competence and language use competence.

Mother Tongue Interference

The first language mastered in a person's life is called L1 or the mother tongue. L1 refers to the language revealed to children from birth until the end of the critical period before puberty. The position of L1 is exceptional in the life of a human being because it is with that language that he learns most of the primary and central concepts in his life (Rahman et al., 2019). The concept of mother tongue is often associated with the mother's language, which describes the closeness of a child's relationship with his mother so that the mother becomes a model in acquiring his first language.

A child learns their mother tongue from their mother. Language can help you think creatively and communicate effectively. Language study is called linguistics. Language helps people express their thoughts. Language lets people share information, beliefs, opinions, commands, thanks, and feelings. Language can express anger, amusement, pleasure, and approval.

The mother tongue is often used to communicate with the family and children's environment. The language mastered after a person has mastered his first language is called L2. In fact, this is not only limited to L2 but can also be applied to the third, fourth and so on (Malana, 2019). Mastery of L2 is often acquired through learning rather than acquisition. This coincides with today's world, characterized by various languages and races, which makes it possible for a person to learn a third, fourth or second language (Rahman et al., 2019). Hidayat and Clarita (2020) found that English is the most spoken language in many countries. Technology and communication depend on English. Listening, reading, speaking, and writing are interconnected. Effective communication boosts student confidence (Singh & Maniam, 2020).

According to and Fadzilah (2018), mother tongue interference causes non-native speakers to make mistakes in language basics, including speaking. Interference language degrades non-native speakers' speech. Nora'Azian and Fadzilah's study (2018) examined how the mother tongue affects Indian students' speech. An elementary school of Tamil nationality (SJKT) in Manjung District found that Indian students struggle to learn oral skills. Dayang Sufikawani, Ruzanna (2017), and Ilangko et al. found that non-native speakers struggle 2014. Indian students have trouble pronouncing the letter "r" when learning English.

Causes of Interference

Second-language learners tend to copy their native language (Loewen & Sato, 2019). Students communicate just in their original language and translate the target language. These pupils need an additional second language to practise and struggle to speak the target language. Delbio et al (2018) found that students may speak their regional language in school. This may require language learning support. From birth, children learn by listening to their parents speak their native language. Biswajit says the regional language is more important than English. Students learn English at their grade level but need help to write error-free phrases.

Second language difficulties cause intralingual and developmental mistakes. The learner's native language influences second-language acquisition. Interlingual errors are native-language-induced mistakes. Transfer or interference mistakes are interlingual. Fries (1945) and Lado claimed in the 1940s and 1950s that the native language has a negative impact 1957. Recent research emphasizes intralingual and developmental errors over interlingual errors Loewen & Sato (2019), but negative transfer or interference is still necessary for second language acquisition (Jorders, 1977; Kellerman, 1979; Touchie, 1983).

Malana (2018) examined how Ilocanos, Ibanags, and Itawes learn English using their native languages. Ilocanos often transfer intonation norms from their first language when learning a language. Thus, they produce more English blunders. Ibanags transfer L1 pronunciation rules to L2. So they mispronounce. The author examines whether Ilocano, Ibanag, and Itawes L2 learners code-shift and code-switch in their target language. These tactics help L2 learners finish tasks.

Radhika's L1 transfer study in L2 acquisition is also crucial 2014. Native language interference affects Tamil, Telugu, Hindi, and Bhojpuri learners' spoken English acquisition. Hu (2015) claims that Chinese pupils struggle to learn English because the languages have different frameworks. English is Indo-European. Chinese, however, is Sino-Tibetan. Many Chinese English learners use their original language to learn other languages since Chinese and English are so different. His research reveals that Chinese English learners need pronunciation coaching.

Challenges of Second Language Acquisition in Speaking

According to Brown, as cited in Tiwery & Souisa (2019), the interactive process that helps to generate meaning through speaking is producing, receiving and processing information. Produce refers to the act of communicating, whereas receive refers to the act of collecting information, which will subsequently be processed to give it significance. Thus, the act of speaking can be labeled as an interactive process that takes place between a speaker and the listener. During the process, meaning is constructed with the given information.

However, many students view mastering the English language as an uphill task for them (Akhter et al., 2020). Based on previous literature, there are a few challenges that may cause students to face difficulty in mastering English language speaking skills. The first challenge is that they may have 1) language anxiety when learning a new language (Altunel, 2019), 2) limited exposure to the English language outside of the classroom (Wahyuningsih & Afandi, 2020), and 3) a lack of confidence to use the language (Altunel, 2019).

Generally, anxiety is known as tension, uneasiness and fear of a particular situation. However, when referring to language anxiety may occur when students are worried and have negative

thoughts about using a new language or conversing in one. The affective filter hypothesis of Krashen (1980) acknowledged the role of fear in language learning. The fear of using a language which is not their mother tongue may cause them not to practice their speaking skills. When learners feel this way, they tend to need clarification about their ability to select the right English words or vocabulary when conversing Tom et al (2013), as cited in Kashinathan et al (2021) in the English language. Thus, students may prefer to stay quiet instead of trying and making mistakes in the language learning process. This is supported by Soomro (2019), who indicated that L2 learners appeared to be not proficient and weak when presenting in front of the class, thus resulting in them experiencing anxiety.

Secondly, limited exposure to English language usage outside their classroom is also a known challenge for learners. Nadesan & Shah (2020) revealed that learners find speaking skills challenging even in the ESL classroom as they are concerned about being judged by their teacher and peers. Due to this experience, the students negatively perceive their ability to converse in English, even in the ESL classroom. As a result, when outside of their classroom, students would return to their first language or their mother tongue as it has been used and learned since childhood (Noviyenty & Putri, 2021). Additionally, they also receive limited encouragement to speak or practice at home as the student's first language is more often used than English (Al Zoubi, 2018).

A study by Paneerselvam and Mohamad (2019) indicated that learners need higher levels of motivation and confidence in speaking English. Either nervousness or limited vocabulary knowledge causes this. In reference to limited vocabulary knowledge, research by Thornbury (2019) discovered that a learner would benefit from having a solid grasp of the top 1,500 most frequent words in English, while the top 200 most frequent words will be pretty helpful in conversation. Therefore, if a learner is unable to grasp basic vocabulary knowledge, they will not be able to have a decent or casual conversation and will eventually avoid using English altogether. This would indirectly diminish their performance in speaking, in and out of the ESL classroom.

Importance of Speaking Skills

Speaking, also known as how an individual communicates, is an essential skill one must master. In our daily lives, we use communication to convey ideas, exchange knowledge, and report on what is happening in our lives (Kamaliah et al., 2018). Speaking is also described as the act of creating and expressing meaning through the use of symbols in a variety of verbal and nonverbal contexts (Chaney, 1998). Thus, for a student to communicate well, two main components must be considered: fluency and accuracy. A balance between these two components is imperative to ensure the speaker sounds fluent and natural when delivering the message.

According to Kheidar (2017), a student's performance may be affected by fluency. Therefore, it may affect how fast or slow the student speaks and can also determine whether the student can speak clearly and fluently. Where else does accuracy focus on grammar and knowing the proper speech structure when communicating with others? A study by Leong & Masoumeh (2017) supports this by stating that one is proficient in the language if one can interact with others clearly and readily.

In the current competitive era of 21st-century learners, there are several reasons why speaking skill is deemed to be imperative. First of all, according to a study by Saleh and Murtaza (2018), graduates who are looking for a job must be proficient in English. It is the

cornerstone of communication and the most crucial linguistic skill one must possess. This is because a vast majority of employers favour graduates who can speak English well.

Besides that, being able to communicate well helps students to establish and sustain social connections. As stated in a study by Rao (2019), individuals may achieve their aim and target in their career or any aspect of their personal life if an appropriate communication style is practiced. When a person can interact and socialize with individuals in his or her immediate social circle through speaking, they would be known to have essential language ability (Kashinathan et al., 2021).

Speaking is also seen as a process of sharing ideas and feelings orally. In order to do so, students need to ensure that they have sufficient vocabulary knowledge. According to Akhter, Tribhuvan and Qureshi (2020), vocabulary is the core of a language. Individuals can only communicate successfully or express their ideas in the language, either orally or in writing, with sufficient vocabulary (Kurniati, 2015). In other words, students who cannot master vocabulary knowledge will most certainly not be able to express themselves in spoken or written form.

As second language learners, students should continuously be motivated to learn English. Students must know that a skill can be continually developed through experience and practice. Thus, making mistakes while learning is part of the process. One can grow tremendously as one improvises through repetition (Van, Dang, D. Pham, Vo & V. Pham, 2021). Therefore, students who intend to be competent speakers must practice their speaking skills by doing various exercises.

Research Method

Research Design

The research design refers to procedures for collecting, analyzing and reporting research in qualitative and quantitative research (Cresswell, 2018). In this study, the researcher will use a mixed method because it provides a systematic way of collecting data, it helps to investigate the extent of the problem by focusing on a small area of the study, and also it involves the combination of methods of data collection which will help in data gathering. This research design involves the selection of sample respondents from a Primary school and administering questionnaires to them to gather information. It is used to assess the respondents' thoughts, opinions and feelings. This research focuses on students from a Private Chinese high school located in Perak The research design was chosen for this study because it enabled the research to gather information concerning the opinions and feelings of the respondents about the influence of mother tongue interference among ESL Learners' Speaking skills in SLA in Chinese Private High School.

Sampling

The participants that were involved in this research are students from a Private Chinese High school. There are 30 participants, 7 male and 23 female students from an upper-secondary Private School in the Kinta District. Purposive sampling was utilized to create the sample for the research under consideration. Sample members are chosen based on their knowledge, gender, and age regarding a research subject in this method, which falls under the category of non-probability sampling techniques (Freedman, 2007). The questionnaires were sent to the participants through Google Forms.

Data Collection

Methods of data collection refer to the methods the researchers use in performing research operations (Kothari, 2004). There are several processes in the data collection procedure in this research. In this research, primary data will be obtained using questionnaires and interviews.

Research Instrument

Questionnaire

The main instrument conducted in this research is questionnaires. Kombo (2006), a questionnaire is a list of questions arranged systematically and designed to solicit information from individuals. The researcher used open and close-ended questionnaires. Harmer (2011) explained that a questionnaire is a widely used and useful instrument for collecting survey information, providing structured, often numerical data, being able to administer without the presence of the researcher, and often being comparatively straightforward to analyse. The instrument used for the data collection is a questionnaire; every item/statement in the questionnaire has three options which are: Yes (), No () and Sometimes (). The questionnaire contained 20 questions consisting of 2 parts. The questionnaire was given to students at the high school level after the researchers observed students in the class. The questionnaire is filled out by students according to the real situation.

Interview

The second instrument conducted in this research is semi-structured interview sessions. The interview is a method of data collection involving the presentation of oral-verbal stimuli and replies in terms of responses (Kothari, 2004). The researcher used semi-structured as the respondents were few. In this research, the interview was used for students. Semi-structured Interview sessions were chosen since they give more rich and practical information. Other than that, it enables the participants to provide further explanations in their responses that would provide useful data regarding the issue. Individual interview types were used to carry out the session to allow a more intimate and in-depth conversation among the participants. Not only that, by conducting interview sessions, researchers have control over the type of interview questions to ask that will eventually contribute to the data received. The interview data were transcribed and analyzed through thematic analysis. The researcher interviewed six ESL Learners after filling out the questionnaire. The purpose of interviewing students is to know more clearly the mother tongue interference among ESL learners' when speaking English. The questions were designed to let the respondents feel completely free to express their answers as they wished, as detailed and complex and as long or as short as they felt appropriate. These questions were intended to evoke fuller and richer responses and probe deeper. This way, unanticipated findings could be discovered. In this research, researchers used six semi structure questions to get the maximal result.

Data Analysis

Data analysis is a process of inspecting, cleaning, transforming and modeling data with the goal of discovering useful information, suggesting conclusions and supporting decision-making. The researcher analyzes the data, organizes and interprets them thematically and by using tables. In this research, the researcher will analyze the data obtained from the research site using analytical methods to study the research results. Includes the mother tongue interference among ESL learners. After that, researchers will summarize the results of the

research into a conclusion. From that conclusion, the researcher will find out the results of the research.

The data collected from the interview sessions were then transcribed to carry out the data analysis stage. Thematic analysis is employed to analyze the transcribed data to explore further understanding on the research findings better and to refine interpretations from the participants.

Findings

Quantitative Findings

Table 4.1 shows the distribution of mean values and standard deviations by items in the variables for Part 1 of the questionnaire. Findings show that the overall average of the items has a mean value and a standard deviation in the scale of low, that is, between the mean value of 1.00-2.33. The mean average of all items in Table 1 was 1.87 (s.d = 0.634). This indicates that level Part 1 is very fair.

Table 4.1

No.	Questions	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
a1	Do you use your mother tongue during English Lessons?	30	1.933	.640
a2	Do you think using your mother tongue has a negative effect on your language learning? (Negative impact of using mother tongue in English Language Learning)	30	2.100	.607
a3	Do you enjoy English language learning?	30	1.400	.621
a4	Do you think mother tongue interference supports language learners?	30	1.767	.504
a5	How do you feel when using your mother tongue during language learning?	30	1.233	.430
a6	Do you fall back to your mother tongue when communicating in English?	30	2.267	.450
a7	Mother tongue can alter the way I read and speak English	30	2.067	.691
a8	I can adapt to the teaching and learning environment without the use of mother tongue	30	1.533	.629
a9	Mother tongue leads students to mix up words in the English language	30	1.833	.791

a10	Do you think in your mother tongue before you speak in English? If yes, does it help you to speak English better?	30	2.133	.973
Total Mean Average (s.d)		30	1.827	.634

Regarding the level of agreement towards mother tongue interference, Item a6, with the statement that “Do you fall back to your mother tongue when communicating in English?” showed the highest agreement (M= 2.267, SD= 0.45). Item a10 followed this, “Do you think in your mother tongue before you speak in English?” If yes, does it help you to speak English better with a mean and standard deviation of (M= 2.133, SD = 0.973)? The next item for high agreement level was Item a2 on the statement, "Do you think using your mother tongue has a negative effect on your language learning?" (M= 2.100, SD = 0.607).

Item a5, “How do you feel when using your mother tongue during language learning?” was the least score in part 1 of the questionnaire (M=1.233, SD=0.430) Item a3 follows this, “Do you enjoy English language learning?” It scored a Mean of 1.40 and an SD of 0.621. The above items scored the least compared to the other items.

Table 4.2 shows the distribution of mean values and standard deviations by items in the variables Part 2. Findings show that the overall average of the items has a mean value, and the standard deviation above the scale is medium, that is, between the mean value of 1.367-2.167. The mean average of all items of Part 2 was 1.833 (s.p = 0.713). This indicates that level Part 2 is fair.

Table 4.2

No.	Questions	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
b1	Are you interested in learning English?	30	1.367	.669
b2	Do you often speak English at home?	30	2.167	.791
b3	Do you often speak English at school?	30	1.933	.583
b4	Do you take tuition to improve your English skills?	30	1.833	.950
b5	Is English teaching in class fun?	30	1.433	.568
b6	Are teachers creative in teaching English in class?	30	1.567	.568
b7	Do you have difficulty speaking English?	30	2.167	.791

b8	Does grammar make it difficult for you to speak English?	30	2.100	.759
b9	Does the lack of vocabulary make it difficult for you to speak English?	30	1.633	.669
b10	Does pronunciation make it difficult for you to speak English?	30	2.133	.776
Total Mean Average (s.d)		30	1.833	.713

Two items, b2 and b7, with the statement “Do you often speak English at home and Do you have difficulty speaking English?” showed the highest agreement ($M= 2.167$, $SD= 0.791$). This shows that the learners do not speak English often in their homes but face difficulty speaking it. This was followed by Item b10, “ Does pronunciation make it difficult for you to speak English?” with a mean and standard deviation of ($M= 2.133$, $SD = 0.776$). The scores show that the learners find pronunciation a challenge in speaking English.

Item b1, “Are you interested in learning English? was the least score in part 1 of the questionnaire ($M=1.367$, $SD=0.669$). The majority of learners answered yes, which indicates they are keen to learn the language. This is followed by Item b5,” Is English teaching in class fun? It scored a Mean of 1.433 and an SD of 0.568. The above items scored the least compared to the other items.

Qualitative Findings

The qualitative findings were utilized to answer the research questions, as well as to augment the results of the quantitative data analysis and close any questionnaire gaps. Therefore, the results obtained from the questionnaire are further supported by the responses obtained through the semi-structured interview conducted. The semi-structured interview enabled the students to share their views pertaining to the challenges they face in acquiring speaking skills. The face-to-face interviews were conducted by the researcher during the students' break time between classes. Upon completion, the researcher triangulated the data obtained to explore further the second research objective on challenges these students face in acquiring speaking skills. The following are the challenges the students face when trying to acquire speaking skills in their ESL classroom.

1) Lack of vocabulary knowledge

From the interview, four students admitted to having issues delivering and expressing their thoughts in English due to the need for more vocabulary knowledge. This is in line with research conducted by Akhter, Tribhuvan and Qureshi (2020), who mentioned that vocabulary knowledge is imperative in language learning. The research also added that students can only construct proper sentences with sufficient vocabulary knowledge.

Interview 2 Excerpt

S2: “I am not able to do proper sentences...so it is difficult”

Interview 3 Excerpt

S3: *"I cannot express my feelings, sometimes the words cannot come out of my mouth. So, I don't know the words I am supposed to use."*

Interview 5 Excerpt

S5: *"Not sure which are the right words to say when speaking."*

Interview 6 Excerpt

S6: *"I face some difficulty to speak in English because of my lack of vocabulary in the English language...so I think that is the main challenge for me."*

2) Limited exposure to speaking English

The interview results also revealed that all six students spoke their first language at home, which is either Mandarin or Cantonese. Out of the six students interviewed, only one student informed me that sometimes the English language is also used when conversing at home. The environment the students are in contributes to their ability to develop their ability to speak in English. According to Shamim et al (2020), students will only be able to enhance their speaking skills if they were to be given a chance to practice. Thus, in the case of all six participants, no opportunities exist for them to practice at home (Al Zoubi, 2018). Due to this, the students only practice speaking in English during their English lessons at school.

Interview 1 Excerpt

S1: *"We always use Mandarin at home to speak. It is easier because my grandparents can only understand Mandarin."*

Interview 2 Excerpt

S2: *"I use Mandarin at home and my family also speak in English sometimes."*

Interview 4 Excerpt

S4: *"Never use English at all at home because we speak in Cantonese and Mandarin with one another."*

Besides the challenges faced, five out of six students agreed that when conversing in English they would think of the sentence they intend to construct in their mother tongue first. The effects of using their mother tongue do not indicate a positive outcome of their ability to speak in English.

Interview 1 Excerpt

S1: *"I use my mother tongue to think of the words I wanna say so I can arrange my sentences and speak more clearly. But my words get mixed up sometimes."*

Interview 2 Excerpt

S2: *"The use of my mother tongue can help me have a better understanding of new words. However, it also causes me to have difficulty in my sentence structure when I speak in English."*

Interview 4 Excerpt

S4: *"No, I do not use my mother tongue to translate in my mind before speaking English."*

Similar results were also tabulated by research conducted by Fitriani and Zulkarnain (2019), whereby the students' mother tongue influences the students' performance when speaking English. This happens because the student's mother tongue interrupts the student's English articulation, and they are more likely to make mistakes when conversing in the English language.

Discussion

Our findings are similar to (AMON, 2019; Oyewole, 2017). First, from the study's main findings, it is evident that the influence of mother tongue interference among ESL learners. Mother tongue interference plays an important role in helping students to learn English. An individual learns the parent language from his birth. It is difficult to get rid of the influence of the mother tongue. Students also feel inferior because of their mother tongue influence. Non-native speakers are not capable of communicating efficiently and effectively. Second language learners have a tendency to transfer everything from their mother tongue to the second language. The learners translate the target language into their mother tongue and speak only in the parent language. Those learners find it difficult to speak in their target language because of a lack of practice in their second language. The students may interact only in their regional language during school hours. This may cause trouble in learning a target language. From birth itself, the child starts to acquire things by listening to the parents in the language spoken by them. The impact and focus of regional language overshadow the learning of English. The students learn the English language at their school level but cannot produce sentences without error.

The findings from the research showed that the students' interest, and motivation in learning English with their mother tongue interference are very positive. Besides, they also assumed that their mother tongue interference could encourage them to learn and speak English confidently. When the students are confident in using their mother tongue in Speaking English, the tendency to participate in lessons is high. For instance, in the data analysis between female and male students towards the mother tongue interference, female students showed the highest responses compared to male students. It can be seen from the tendency of students who respond to the questionnaires. From the findings, it is obvious that the students involved in this research employ the interference of their mother tongue in speaking English. During the interview session, the majority of the respondents agreed that speaking skill is the most difficult language skill. because all of them use their mother tongue (Mandarin / Cantonese) at home when communicating with their parents.

The first research question shows how mother tongue interference affects speaking skills among ESL learners. This is evidenced in the results in table 1, which shows that the mother tongue alters how students speak English. This is in line with the report of Sharman (1957), who noted that no language could take the place of the native tongue, and no system of education can afford to disregard the native language without detriment to the mental development of the child.

The second research question reveals the challenges faced in acquiring speaking skills among ESL learners. This is evidenced in the results in table 2, which states that students find it difficult to understand and speak some words without the use of their mother tongue.

However, some students highlighted a few issues during the interview session. They are having issues delivering and expressing their thoughts in English due to the need for more vocabulary knowledge. Besides that, the interview results also revealed that all six students

spoke their first language at home, either Mandarin or Cantonese. The environment the students are in contributes to their ability to develop their ability to speak in English.

Motivation and Challenges

Implying from the findings, it is apparent mother tongue interference contributes in learning the targeted language. String of sentence structures formed in student's native language are actually being transformed word by word in English. In this point of time, there would be inter-lapping of the native language. Words of encouragement from the professionals are essential to build confidence among ESL students. Educators could give some situations and ask students for opinions on how to react and communicate in their mother tongue before initiating in the targeted language. This mechanism would assist and stimulate knowledge acquired in English. Meanwhile, teachers can correct them in real life situations. This would be a challenge for teachers as they have to monitor every word and the sentence structure even then only if the teacher has the prime knowledge of the student's native language as well. This would be the biggest challenge of all (Laghaei et al., 2021).

Conclusion

The findings prove that most learners come from different cultural and language backgrounds. The teacher can provide opportunities to expose themselves to the targeted language by sharing their ways of thinking, which may reduce mother tongue influence. Students may engage faster in the play way method than in the narrative method. Teaching English to learners is a challenging task. Hence, mother tongue interference should be limited. The learner needs to be taught visual and audio-lingual methods to attain success. The children can be provided with opportunities and new experiences.

In accordance with the findings and limitations of this study, the researchers suggest having similar research that can examine other skills like the mother tongue interference in writing. The findings reveal that the use of the mother tongue is obvious as students tend to use the English language only in the classroom during English lessons. Most learners perceive translation in their mother tongue assists them in speaking in English with the need for more vocabulary to speak in English.

In addition to that, the sample for this research is only based on one school of the population which is only 30 percent of the form 5 students in a class. Therefore, a larger sample will be appropriate to generalize the research. A triangulation method will be effective in having a vivid version of the study.

To recapitulate, it is recommended to integrate the class with some activities like listening versus speaking that can initiate the students to speak English without mother tongue interference. Exposing students to music and movies is the best way to resolve mother-tongue interference. According to Utomo & Suwartono (2020), demonstration of methods is one way to better understand and drill students on the language to minimize mother tongue interference (Utomo & Suwartono, Universitas Muhammadiyah Purwokerto, Indonesia, 2020, p. 13).

In the end, the students used their mother tongue in the target language, and the researchers added that's mother tongue does not improve students' speaking skills. Similarly, the study's findings indicated that lack of knowledge of the target language, shyness, and lack of confidence contributes to using the mother tongue in language Learning. In general, the

results show that a student's success and growth in speech depend on how interested they are.

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