The Manifestation of Mother Tongue Influence (L1) in Writing Essays Among Primary ESL Students in Perak

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Abstract
This study is important since it addresses Tamil-speaking ESL learners' concerns, notably primary schoolchildren in Perak, Malaysia. The study shows that transferring linguistic knowledge from one's native language (L1) to a second language (L2) affects punctuation, spelling, verb tense, subject-verb agreement, and pronoun use. The study used a qualitative research technique to examine how linguistic traits are transmitted from L1 to L2 and how to remedy this issue. The research included 10 Perak fifth-graders. Each research participant had to write well in Tamil and English.   Four Perak teachers were chosen to comment. Two are first-language speakers and two are second-language speakers. The study's main findings reveal Tamil ESL students in Perak's English writing challenges. Capitalization errors and proper usage of commas, semicolons, and hyphens were common punctuation faults. Students acquainted with Tamil grammar sometimes deleted "be" verbs, making their usage difficult. Pronoun misuse, especially gender misidentification, was identified due to gender marking differences between the two languages.   Due to their Tamil proficiency, students sometimes misused pronouns, resulting in gender discrepancies. This research's instructional implications propose ways to lessen L1 linguistic traits' influence on L2 writing. The study suggests adding interesting games and gamification to schooling.   This study illuminates the writing challenges Tamil ESL students in Perak, Malaysia, have when switching from Tamil to English.   .
Keywords: Language Transfer, L1 Influence, L2 Writing, Tamil ESL Learners, Punctuation Errors, Mitigation Strategies

Introduction

The English language is a global lingua franca. This prestigious language has a history of conquest and power and is often seen as the most prominent variant of language. Its undeniable importance stems from its ubiquitous presence, as it serves as the predominant language spoken worldwide (Holloway, 2021). In line with the Malaysian education system and its policy framework (2015- 2025), English is designated as the second language (L2) and is compulsory at all educational levels. Thus, possessing a proficient command of English is deemed imperative. However, a growing concern has emerged regarding the declining proficiency levels among English as a Second Language (ESL) learners, who often encounter challenges in effective language communication. One of the key reasons for this decline can be attributed to the adverse impact of learners' mother tongue on their acquisition of English as a second language. In line with this, this study seeks to explore the multifaceted ways in which the influence of the mother tongue becomes evident in the sentence structure, vocabulary usage, and grammatical patterns within the written compositions of primary ESL students. The primary objective is to acquire comprehensive knowledge of the challenges faced by these learners and pinpoint the specific areas where the influence of their native language (L1) is most prominent. Moreover, the research also seeks to propose effective strategies to mitigate the influence of the mother tongue on L2 writing, ultimately fostering the language development and academic accomplishments of primary ESL student.

Problem Statement

The primary motivation behind this study is the declining proficiency in English among students. Young ESL learners face particular challenges in writing tasks, struggling to construct grammatically accurate sentences due to their limited familiarity with the language rules and their proper application in context. As a result, they often resort to applying structures from their native language (Tamil) when writing in their second language (English). Consequently, this results in a mixture of misused tenses, phrases, and jumbled words, eventually rendering their written works unintelligible. Meta-analysis of studies has highlighted the influence of the mother tongue on second language acquisition, especially among Tamil school students, significantly impacting their English writing skills. The teaching and learning of English in Tamil schools have been a subject of contentious debate among language instructors. Despite the ongoing discourse regarding student performance in various Malaysian schools, the challenges specific to Tamil schools have not received adequate attention. Consequently, there is a pressing need to conduct a comprehensive investigation into the underlying factors contributing to language acquisition difficulties in this context. Accordingly, this study aims to address the interlanguage communication issues prevalent in Tamil schools. Ultimately, the goal of this research is to offer valuable insights and potential solutions to enhance the proficiency levels of students in Tamil school settings.

Research Objectives

1. To identify the linguistic features that are transferred from L1 to L2.
2. To explore the ways to mitigate the influence of L1 linguistic elements on L2 writing.

Research Questions

1. What are the linguistic features that are transferred from L1 to L2?
2. What are the ways to mitigate the influence of L1 linguistic features on L2 writing?

Limitations of the study

Several limitations are inherent in this study. Firstly, the duration of the investigation is constrained due to school regulations, restricting data collection to after-school hours. This may have impacted the smooth flow of the research. Moreover, another limitation lies in the sampling method, as the research was conducted in a single Tamil school in Perak, which limits the generalizability of the findings to a broader population.

Literature Review

Mother Tongue Influence (MTI) in ESL Writing

Mother tongue influence is coined as the consequential effect resulting from the utilization of one's native language on the acquisition and expression of a second language. It is a natural phenomenon that occurs when learners transfer linguistic features, and structures from their L1 to their L2. The impact of mother tongue influence on ESL writing, particularly from Tamil to English, is a significant area of concern. The linguistic and cultural distinctions between Tamil and English pose challenges for young learners, impeding their ability to effectively grasp and apply English writing conventions. The distinct grammatical structures of Tamil and English cause Tamil-speaking ESL learners to inadvertently apply Tamil grammar rules to English sentences, leading to severe grammatical errors. This compromises their writing accuracy and fluency, making effective communication of ideas more challenging.

Differences between Tamil and English

Tamil and English are two distinct languages with significant dissimilarities in various linguistic aspects. These distinctions span language genealogy, script and writing conventions, phonetic structures, lexical inventories, and socio-cultural contexts. Exploring these disparities offer valuable insights into the unique features and challenges associated with each language.

Tamil is hailed as one of the oldest languages in the world. Its historical significance is further reinforced by its recognition as a classical language by UNESCO. The earliest documented instances of Old Tamil can be traced back to the 2nd century BC in the form of concise inscriptions known as Tamil Brahmi. Tamil, consists of 12 vowels and 18 consonants, which are artfully combined to create diverse syllables. The script follows a specific order, with vowels preceding consonants consistently. The grammar and syntax of contemporary literary Tamil entail a level of complexity, guided by a multitude of rules governing sentence construction and the usage of verbs, nouns, and other essential linguistic elements in written discourse. Among its distinguishing features, Tamil employs tense markers and gender markers for nouns, setting it apart distinctively from other languages. Structurally, Tamil adopts a verb-final configuration, allowing flexibility in the arrangement of subject and object within sentences. Adjectives and different clauses, including relative, adverbial, and infinitive clauses, conventionally precede the modified term. Moreover, inflections denoting tense, number, person, and case are indicated by employing suffixes.

The mighty reign of the English language in the modern era stands unrivalled, casting its vast linguistic dominion over the globe with unyielding authority. The historical development of the English language can be traced back to the arrival of the Germanic tribes, whose similar language eventually evolved into what is now known as Old English. In the 14th century, Middle English emerged, but with the infusion of numerous French words. During this era, the development of the English language, particularly English grammar, began to progress,

placing significant emphasis on syntax. English in the 21st century has become exceedingly refined. It is commonly known as Standard English. This language uses words that are made from 26 characters in the Latin alphabet.The parts of speech in English are nouns, pronouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, prepositions, conjunctions, articles, and interjections. In terms of syntax, English employs a rigid word order thatfollows certain specific patterns in arranging the subject, verb, and object within a sentence. The historical, etymological, and structural disparities between these two languages clearly indicate a restricted degree of mutual intelligibility.

Language Transfer and Its Impact on L2 Writing

Language transfer is a phenomenon that takes place when people who are learning a second language (L2) apply the linguistic components, structures, and rules of their first language (L1) to their second language acquisition. It frequently results in both good and negative affects on second language competency, with a major effect on the ability to write in the target language. Recognizing the role that language transfer plays and comprehending how it affects writing in the target language is of highest importance in the field of second language acquisition. Evidence for linguistic contact often takes the form of shared grammatical structures. Learners of a second language sometimes rely on their first language's grammatical norms and patterns when forming sentences in their second language (Bailey & Christian, 2021). The influence may result in grammatical problems, the most prominent of which are subject-verb agreement discrepancies and tense inconsistencies, both of which are especially noticeable in written texts. Language transfer has a significant impact on aspects of writing in a second language, such as vocabulary and word choice. Learners of a second language frequently choose L2 words that closely match words in their L1 or have a common etymological origin with those words. This can result in lexical errors, such as the use of false cognates or the selection of terminology that is less exact in the context of the second language (L2).

Challenges Posed by Language Transfer in L2 Writing

In writing in a second language, the difficulties that arise from language transfer are multidimensional and can take many different forms. The obstacles that learners must face are significantly influenced by the differences in syntax and semantics between their L1 and L2. Writings that are coherent and error-free are difficult for learners to produce when they try to write in their L2 utilizing structures and standards that are unique to their L1. One of the main challenges that must be solved is grammar. Language transfer can lead to mistakes in subject-verb agreement, tense usage, and word order, which can reduce the overall caliber of written documents (Giri et al., 2023). For instance, a student writing in their second language who's native language doesn't have subject-verb agreement rules may struggle to use the right forms. Choosing the right words is still another challenge. The misuse of terms that are semantically related to the vocabulary of the first language but may not be appropriate for the context of the second language might result from language transfer. This leads to issues with word choice and clarity, both of which are crucial for effective writing.

Strategies to Address Language Transfer in L2 Writing

One of the most crucial objectives while learning a second language is to reduce the impact of language transfer on writing in the target language. Both teachers and students need to employ strategies in order to get over the challenges and foster the ability to write in a

second language. There are additional strategies that might be effective in this field. The explicit teaching of grammar is one of the primary methods. Instructors are able to assist students in distinguishing between the linguistic structures of their L1 and L2 by ensuring that students have a solid comprehension of the grammatical rules relevant to the L2 being studied. Learners are given the ability to make more educated decisions about their writing as a result of this. Feedback and the correction of errors are two of the most important factors in lowering the impact of language transmission (Canagarajah, 2022). Learners are able to identify and correct their faults when they receive feedback that is both timely and specific on written assignments. Particularly useful is individualized feedback that zeroes in on a particular aspect of language acquisition and works to improve it. It is critical to engage in consistent writing practice. Learners improve their ability to use L2-specific rules and structures the more they participate in activities that require them to write. Learners will have more opportunities to practice their writing abilities on a consistent basis if the curriculum includes writing exercises, essays, and creative projects (Winskel, 2020).

Implications for Language Instruction and Curriculum Development
Understanding the impact that language transfer has on writing in a second language (L2 writing) has substantial consequences for the teaching of languages and the creation of curricula. Language educators' teaching methods will need to be modified in order to tackle the problems caused by language transfer efficiently. The creation of educational resources that explicitly target various facets of language transfer is crucial (Adinolfi et al., 2022). The explanations of L2 grammar in these materials, along with the exercises and examples they contain that contrast and contrast the L1 and L2 structures, should be understandable to learners. To assist students in identifying and resolving transfer-related issues, educational program developers should also consider incorporating error analysis and correction exercises. The primary goal of teacher training programs should be to equip educators with the knowledge and skills required to effectively identify and address language transfer difficulties. Teachers play a crucial role in reducing the negative effects of language transfer by providing students with targeted feedback, guidance, and instructional opportunities.

The Role of Feedback in Enhancing L2 Writing Skills
Feedback is essential while learning a language, especially when developing writing abilities in a second language (L2).   It is essential for giving students feedback on their writing work and enabling them to see their areas of strength and growth.   An essential subject that calls for in-depth study is the role of feedback in second language (L2) writing. Effective sources of feedback include peer assessments, self-evaluations, written remarks from teachers, and automated feedback from writing tools (Habib et al., 2022).   Regardless of its source, the primary purpose of feedback is to direct learners toward improving their writing abilities. The significance of feedback lies in its ability to enhance L2 writing in numerous ways. An essential factor is the rectification of inaccuracies.   Feedback serves as a means to identify and correct grammatical, lexical, and structural mistakes in written writings.   This corrective technique specifically targets the difficulties associated with language transfer and other prevalent problems encountered in second language writing.   Instructors can assist learners in identifying and correcting problems linked to transfer by offering precise comments and corrections (Raadha Krishnan & Sharmini, 2021).
Feedback additionally fosters learner introspection and meta-cognitive awareness.   Upon receiving criticism on their writing, learners partake in a reflective process wherein they

assess their flaws and contemplate other ways.   Meta cognitive awareness is essential for achieving long-term growth, since it enables learners to successfully utilize feedback in future writing assignments (Price, 2020). Moreover, feedback has the potential to improve learners' understanding and knowledge of language.   Feedback functions as a key instructional tool by highlighting particular language components and conventions.   It not only tackles urgent writing problems but also enhances learners' general language competency, increasing their awareness of L2-specific structures, grammar regulations, and vocabulary utilization.

Both the timing and nature of feedback are crucial factors to take into account.   Immediate feedback is advantageous for fixing faults and boosting understanding, but delayed feedback offers learners the chance to independently revise their work.   Both forms of feedback possess their own benefits and should be used into second language (L2) writing training. Furthermore, the notion of feedback also encompasses peer and self-assessment (Chattoraj & Chattoraj, 2022).   Peer review activities promote the exchange of feedback among learners, establishing a cooperative learning atmosphere.   Self-assessment prompts learners to engage in a critical evaluation of their own writing.   These approaches enhance instructor feedback by engaging learners more actively in the evaluation and enhancement of their writing.

The ramifications of this principle are substantial for language instruction.   It is imperative for educators to receive training in order to deliver constructive and precise criticism that centers on particular elements of second language (L2) writing (Mansoor et al., 2023).   In addition, it is important to motivate learners to actively participate in the feedback process, proactively seeking clarification when necessary and use it as a means for self-enhancement. It is crucial to establish curricula that provide complete feedback and prioritize writing abilities in order to promote the growth of proficient second language (L2) writers.   Further investigation in this field should persist in examining the intricacies of feedback in second language writing and determining the most effective strategies for optimizing its influence on learners' linguistic progress.

Cross-Linguistics Analysis of L1 in ESL Writing
Punctuation (Capitalization)
Punctuation, and in particular, capitalization, assumes a salient role as a linguistic feature demonstrating negative transfer within the realm of second language acquisition. Tamil ESL learners, often overlook the significance of capital letters. The Times of India also reports that even the oldest available 'Sangam' literature, 'Tholkappiyam,' dated before 350 BC, exhibits no usage of upper or lower case letters (Sulochana, 2019). Moreover, the influence of the mother tongue also extends to the use of punctuation marks in L2 writing. The ancient Tamil language did not employ punctuation marks in their writing styles. This transformation is evident in Thomas Hitoshi Pruiksma's (2022) efforts to translate the classical Tamil masterpiece, 'Thirukural.' Pruiksma described that punctuation was not a part of Tamil until its interaction with the English language. The absence of certain punctuation marks, such as apostrophes, in Tamil can be attributed to the grammar component known as 'Vetrumai Urubugal.' For instance, the phrase 'Ravi's ball' would be written as 'ரவியினஎ பநௐஎ' (Raviyinathu panthu) using the 6th vetrumai urubu grammar rule. This clearly elucidates the absence of apostrophes in the Tamil language. As Tamil script evolved over time, the use of punctuation marks became more standardized.

Missing Verbs-to-be

Verbs-to-be is also another prominent grammatical component that has been affected by the influence of the mother tongue. A comprehensive study conducted by Maniam (2020) shed light on the detrimental impact of the mother tongue on L2 writing, particularly with regard to the lack of the verb 'to be.' This phenomenon is due to the linguistic characteristics of the Tamil language, which notably lacks a copula. In line with this, Ram and Devi (2021), also elucidate Tamil as a morphologically rich and agglutinative language that does not have a copula which affords considerable flexibility in word order, without modifying the meaning of the sentence. The concept of verbs-to-be' is typically expressed through alternative grammatical structures in Tamil, such as word order, verb inflections, and contextual cues.

Syntactical Discrepancy (SVO vs SOV)

Tamil sentences demonstrate a flexible word order, primarily influenced by pragmatic factors rather than strict grammatical rules. In contrast, English adheres to a rigid word order, organizing the subject, verb, and object in specific patterns within a sentence. This striking dissimilarity stems from Tamil's head-final structure, where the verb typically precedes the object, positioned at the sentence's end (Kumaran, 2021). Additionally, the Tamil language exhibits a fluid sentence structure as the word order may vary based on context, emphasis, and speaker intentions. On the other hand, English language strictly adheres to SVO, to construct simple sentences.

Spelling

The profound impact of Tamil is evident in the treatment of plural nouns, where distinct suffixes are employed to denote plurality and preserve phonetic smoothness and euphonic harmony (Wilden, 2020). In Tamil, plural nouns typically receive the '-கள் ' (Kal) suffix and euphonic suffixes are added to singular nouns to maintain linguistic harmony. However, this contrasts with English, where plurals are commonly formed by appending '-s' or '-es' to the singular noun. As a consequence of this mother tongue influence, Tamil learners of English may incorrectly apply Tamil pluralization rules to English words, leading to misspellings and errors. For instance, a Tamil learner might spell 'families' as 'familyes' based on Tamil's pluralization pattern.

Pronouns Reference

The differences in pronouns between Tamil and English languages are quite distinct and can lead to challenges for Tamil ESL learners. English pronouns are classified into several categories, including personal, interrogative, demonstrative, relative, indefinite, intensive, and reflexive pronouns. Additionally, English pronouns possess four unique attributes such as person (first, second, and third), number (singular and plural), case (subjective, objective, and genitive), and gender (feminine, masculine, and neutral or inclusive). In contrast, Tamil employs a less intricate pronoun system, consisting of only three pronouns such as தன்னிலை (First), முன்னிலை
(Second), and படரலக (Third) (Munas & Zunoomy, 2021). Furthermore, English verbs do not
inherently indicate the gender or sometimes the number of the subject. For example:

      English: That boy is reading a book.

Tamil : அந்தப் லபயன் பௌதத்தகம் படித்Fக் ககிண் டிரௌக்கிறின்.

English: That girl is reading a book.

Tamil : அந்தப் கபண் ஒரு பௌத்தகம் படிக்கிறிள்.

In both sentences, the verb "is reading" remains the same unlike in Tamil where the verbs changedtheir forms to reflect the gender and number of the subject. Furthermore, Tamil pronouns exhibit acomplex system of addressing individuals based on social hierarchy and formality. For instance:

Singular: நொன் (naan) - I,   நீ (nee) - you (informal)

Plural: நொம் (naam) - we,   நீங்கள் (neengal) - you (formal)

Formal: அவர் (avar) - he/she,   அவரகள் (avarkal) - they

Research Gap

Despite the extensive body of research on language acquisition and teaching methodologies, thereis a noticeable gap in the existing literature regarding the manifestation of mother tongue influence(L1) in ESL writing, specifically among primary students in Perak, Malaysia. While some studieshave explored various aspects of second language writing and the influence of the mother tongue, a specific research gap remains within this particular population and context. Although previous studies have highlighted the potential manifestation of L1 influence in sentence structure, verb tense usage, vocabulary choice, and discourse organization, there is limited research that delves into these specific aspects within the essays written by primary ESL students in Perak. While it is acknowledged that L1 influence can lead to errors in second language writing, there is a lack of exploration into the specific types and frequency of errors present in the essays of young Tamil ESL students in Perak.

Research Methodology

This study employed a qualitative research design to investigate the transfer of linguistic features from L1 to L2 and to explore the strategies to mitigate the influence of L1 on L2 writing. This approach enables a thorough examination of the phenomenon in a naturalistic setting. Additionally,it facilitates the exploration of social and cultural factors that may affect the manifestation of mother tongue influence in L2 writing. The researchers used the purposive sampling technique to select ten Year Five students from a school in Perak, to participate in this study. Participants mustmeet the inclusion criteria of being primary students in Perak with experience writing essays in their mother tongue (L1) and English (L2) languages. In addition, the researchers also recruited four teachers (two L1 speaking teachers and two L2 speaking teachers) from one of the schools located in Perak. The instruments used in this research are document analysis of written essays and semi-structured interviews. The written essays from the participants are collected and analyzed to identify the linguistic features transferred from L1 to L2. Furthermore, the semi-structured interviews are conducted to explore the ways to mitigate the influence of L1 on L2 writing.

Data Collection Method

In this research, the participants were tasked with writing an essay on the topic "My Favourite Teacher," and a total of ten essays were collected for analysis. The documents were analyzed and tabulated to identify the linguistic items that are transferred in the L2 writing. In addition, to gather relevant information related to the research topic, semistructured interviews were conducted with the four teachers. These short interviews, lasting around twenty minutes, were designed to obtain more comprehensive and in-depth data, serving as part of the data collection process.

Data Analysis Procedure

The essays written by the students were carefully read and analyzed to identify the frequency countof the errors made by the participants in their writing activities. The errors were tabulated and categorized based on their frequency and linguistic features. On the other hand, NVivo 12 softwareis used to analyze the semi-structured interviews conducted among four L1 and L2 speaking teachers. Thematic analysis is used to analyze the qualitative data from the transcribed verbatims,aiming to identify recurring patterns or emergent themes.

Data Analysis

The first research question is 'what are the linguistic features have been transferred from L1 to L2?(RQ1). The types of linguistic items identified are punctuation, missing verbs-to-be, spelling, pronouns reference, subject verb agreement and tenses.

Punctuation (Capitalization)

Table 1:
 Examples of punctuation errors made by the participants.

Punctuation Errors	
1	One day when *i* will grow up …
2	…*i* would like to thank her…
3	She is my ***english*** teacher.
4	…because she is don't know ***tamil*** but….can speak ***tamil*** little bit…
5	She is ***28 years old*** energetic lady.
6	…my ***english*** clas.
7	…I must look at it ***From*** every…

The analysis of the essays revealed a considerable number of punctuation errors. For instance, capitalization was consistently flawed, with capital letters appearing in the middle of clauses for common nouns, as in "I must look at it From every..." instead of "I must look at it from every...". Additionally, similar errors were also evident in proper nouns, such as 'english' instead of 'English'.Besides that, hyphenation errors were prevalent, with instances like "She is 28 years old energeticlady" instead of "She is a 28-year-old energetic lady," where the hyphen connecting the words in acompound noun phrase was absent. Furthermore, the correct usage of superscript with ordinal numbers was lacking, as evident in the extract "...looking back my 10th grade..." instead of the proper form "...looking back at my 10th grade...". These findings highlight the participants' struggles with punctuation conventions, which affected the clarity and accuracy of their writing.

Table 2:
Interview Data Extract from L1 (Tamil) speaking teachers

L1 (Tamil) speaking teachers
"…they just follow the Tamil way of writing…too used to it. So, capital letters can come anywhere in the sentence or nowhere at all…"
"…using a comma, superscript fonts….not really frequent in Tamil language. So, children just write what they know when they learn a different language"

The L1 speaking teachers note that the students tend to follow the conventions of the Tamil language in their English writing. This is evident in the inconsistent use of capital letters in sentences, where they may appear anywhere or not at all. Additionally, the students demonstrate limited familiarity with punctuation marks such as commas and superscript fonts, which are less prevalent in Tamil. The teachers suggest that the students rely on their knowledge of Tamil when learning a second language like English. This phenomenon leads to the students' writing habits being influenced by their native language, resulting in punctuation errors and deviations from English writing conventions.

Verbs to 'be'
Table 3:
Examples of verb-to-be errors made by the participants

	Verbs-to-be errors
1	…and she *is* always time to play.
2	…because she *is* don't know tamil…
3	…my teacher very clever…
4	…they confident in learning…

The essays of the students demonstrated a significant error related to the usage of the "be" verb. The analysis showed that the students missed the 'be' verbs when required, especially when these copular verbs were needed to complete the subject-verb-complement construction. For example, sentences like "...my teacher very clever..." lacked the "be" verb "is" required for proper completion. Similarly, "...they confident in learning..." lacked the necessary verb "are" before the adjective "confident." Moreover, the analysis also uncovered an excessive use of the "be" verb among the ESL Tamil students. They included the "be" verb in constructions where it was unnecessary, as seen in "...because she is don't know Tamil." Despite the presence of the primary verb "do," they still inserted a "be" verb incorrectly, treating it as an auxiliary verb. The students also replaced other verbs with "be," as in the sentence "...and she is always time to play," where "is" was used instead of the appropriate "have" verb "has."

Table 4:
Interview Data Extract from L1 (Tamil) speaking teachers

L1 (Tamil) speaking teachers
"…the rule is missing in Tamil. The students just know the verb should be used and they use them whenever they feel like it. They use or don't use. For them, the 'be' verb is something new. Just like kids with new toys, these kids play around with the new words they learn."
"Yeah…you can see the 'is', the 'are'…normally the present form of 'be' verb everywhere. It'slike they think if you use it, you are right. Whether you use it correctly is not a matter to think about. Or they don't use it at all because it's not in Tamil."

The interviews with teachers unveiled that the students' difficulties with the 'be' verb were attributedto knowledge transfer from the Tamil language, where the system of inserting a verb between a subject and an adjective is absent. Consequently, the students frequently omitted the 'be' verb whenrequired. The teachers also observed the students' inclination to overgeneralize this newly acquiredrule, leading them to use the 'be' verb excessively, even in inappropriate contexts, as they eagerly embraced the novelty of the rule, disregarding its correct application.

Spelling
Table 5:
Examples of spelling errors made by the participants

Spelling Errors	
1	She has a *smailing* face.
2	…of a *ruputed* government school…
3	…a knowledgeable and *briliant* person.
4	She is always *smilling*.
5	…Jothi *thaught* my english …
6	…my english *clas*.
7	…outside of the *littel* world…
8	…the true meaning of the *stroy*.
9	…the life lessons she *thaught* me.

Spelling errors were prominently evident throughout the students' essays. Numerous words were misspelled, displaying altered letter orders such as "stroy" instead of "story" and "littel" in place of"little." Additionally, there were instances of extra letters added, as in "thaught" instead of "taught."Incorrect letter usage was also found, such as "ruputed" instead of "reputed." Furthermore, letter omission was observed in words like "briliant" instead of "brilliant" or "clas" instead of "class." Some errors resulted in completely different spellings, such as "smailing" for "smiling".

Table 6:

Interview Data Extract from L1 (Tamil) speaking teachers

L1 and L2 speaking teachers
"English spelling is always a headache. Those speaking English at home also will have problems. Here, most students have spelling mistakes because they follow the Tamil spelling rule…how you say is how you write."
""…Yes yes…spelling is a problem for them. Very much. They just follow the way they saythe words. So, they miss the letters or go and add more…too used to Tamil I think"My students, including those with high proficiency, frequently make spelling mistakes

The extensive occurrence of spelling errors in the essay analysis can be attributed to the sound- symbol correspondence present in the Tamil language. In Tamil, words are spelled based on their pronunciation. As Tamil-speaking students attempted to spell English words, they applied the spelling conventions of their native language, resulting in the omission of letters in words like "clas" for "class" and "smailing" for "smiling."

Pronouns Reference Errors

Table 7:

Examples of pronoun reference errors made by the participants

	Pronoun Reference Errors
1	Mrs Aruna teacher is my favourite teacher….She explains *his* lessons…
2	Aruna teacher….and *he* has a really attractive personality.
3	…well all the students love *him*.

The essay analysis indicates a notable pattern of incorrect third-person pronoun usage among the students. This error primarily stems from misidentifying the gender of the subject when using pronouns. For example, despite Mrs. Aruna being a female teacher, she is referred to as "his lessons" instead of "her lessons" in one sentence. Moreover, the female teacher is mistakenly addressed as "he" with an attractive personality, rather than the appropriate pronoun "she." Similarly, in another instance, the female teacher is referred to as "him" instead of "her" when expressing the students' affection for her. In the Tamil language, the pronoun "அவன்" (avan) and"அவள்" (aval) respectively represent "He" for a male individual and "She" for a female individual. When translating these pronouns to English, a straightforward one-to-one conversion occurs, with "அவன்" (avan) becoming "he," and "அவள்" (aval) becoming "she." Unlike the

plural pronoun "அவரகள்" (avargal), which lacks a direct equivalent in English, the pronouns

"he" and "she" in Tamil have distinct and unambiguous counterparts in the English language.

Furthermore, in the Tamil language, the pronoun "அவரகள்" (avargal) serves as a third-person

plural pronoun that encompasses "he," "she," or "they" in English. This gender-neutral andrespectful pronoun is utilized when addressing individuals or groups. When translated to English,

"அவரகள்" (avargal) is commonly rendered as "they" for plural references and can also signify

"he" or "she" when referring to a singular person based on the social status, depending on the context and the individual's gender.

Subject-Verb-Agreement (SVA) Errors

Table 8:

Examples of Subject Verb Agreement errors made by the participants

Subject Verb Agreement errors	
1	She *tell* us interesting stories …
2	She *deliver* the information to my class…
3	…because she is *don't* know tamil…
4	She *come* for school in …
5	She *have* a unique style…
6	…and we *wishes* her all good things…

The students' essays consistently revealed errors in subject-verb agreement, involving the usage of plural verbs with singular subjects and vice versa. For example, the sentence "She deliver the information to my class..." incorrectly uses the plural verb "deliver" with the singular subject "She."Conversely, in the sentence "...and we wishes her all good things...", the students incorrectly use the singular verb "wishes" with the plural subject "we." The essays also displayed errors in using copular verbs. For instance, in the sentence "A good teacher are a gift...", the students incorrectly used the plural copular verb "are" with the singular subject "A good teacher." Similarly, in sentenceslike "...because she is don't know Tamil...", the students used the incorrect plural dummy operator"do" with the singular subject "she," instead of using "does" to negate the clause. This is because, in the Tamil language, subject-verb agreement (SVA) is not a grammatical feature. Irrespective ofthe subject's number, the verb form remains unchanged.

Tenses

Table 8:

Examples of tenses errors made by the participants

Tenses Errors	
1	She *teached* a maths subject….
2	She *didn't* scold any students…
3	She also *got* Apple laptop.

The essays of the students revealed numerous tense errors, primarily involving the improper conversion of present tense verbs to the past tense. For instance, sentences such as "She didn't scoldany students..." and "She also got an Apple laptop" were used incorrectly instead of the correct forms "She doesn't scold any students..." (indicating the teacher's characteristics in the present) and"She also has an Apple laptop" (conveying the ongoing possession of the laptop). Tense rules are entirely different in Tamil and could not be emulated when writing English sentences. However, to differentiate the tense, the students are required to change the suffix and the end of the verb to showthe differences in present and past tenses. This consistent rule applies in all Tamil writing situations. Their base forms, present participles, and past participles, combined with copular verbs and auxiliary verbs, make the English tense one of the most challenging aspects faced by Tamil students. The absence of a direct correlation between Tamil and English tense rules makes Englishtense usage one of the most difficult aspects for Tamil learners.

What are the ways to mitigate the influence of L1 linguistic features on L2 writing? (RQ2)Doing more practice on writing essay

Interview 2 Excerpt :

R2 "*Apart from that, I will also suggest they do more practice so that they can minimize the mistakes and I believe that more practice on writing essays so that they can improve the usage of punctuation.*"

According to respondent 2 (L2 teacher), it is vital to offer young learners more writing tasks to allow them ample practice in developing their writing skills. Composing essays is a valuable approach to improve students' punctuation, grammar, and overall writing abilities. engaging in writing practice enables better utilization of punctuation marks, including commas, semicolons, colons, apostrophes, quotation marks, and hyphens, thereby facilitating their progression from L1 to L2 writing proficiency.

Grammar   rules
explicitlyInterview 2
Excerpt :

R2: "I am constantly concerned about their grammar, therefore I always use textbooks, online resources, or language learning apps that provide clear explanations and examples of grammaticalprinciples."

Respondent 2 emphasized dedicating time to analyze grammar principles, including subject-verb agreement, verb tenses, sentence structure, punctuation rules, and commonly confused phrases. The identification of areas requiring improvement allows for focused attention on specific topics. Additionally, respondent 2 also cited the utilization of textbooks, language learning applications, and online resources, such as grammar-checking programs and interactive websites, to facilitate students in elevating their L1 to L2 essay writing. These resources serve to enhance students' practice and comprehension of punctuation and grammar rules.

Give   immediate   feedback   to   avoid
fossilizationInterview 1 Excerpt :

R1: "I..follow certain methods to overcome these problems, I try to give them quick feedback...because I don't want them to follow the same pattern of doing these mistakes."

Interview 2 Excerpt :

R2: "As for me, I use some ways to overcome these problems. I will call them personally and givethem my comment on the errors they made."

Interview 3 Excerpt :

R3: "I use specific strategies to deal with these issues. I make an effort to provide them with timelyfeedback since I don't want them to repeat their mistakes.

The respondents stressed the significance of delivering prompt feedback during class to address common grammatical and punctuation errors frequently observed in students' essays. They recommended using concise explanations, along with relevant examples and practice exercises, topromote proper language usage and assist students in improving their L2 writing skills. Respondents 1 and 2 emphasized the ability to swiftly correct students' essay errors to prevent theentrenchment of mistakes. On the other hand, respondent 3 highlighted the importance of providing timely and constructive feedback to avoid the persistence of errors.

<u>**Fostering**</u>
<u>**game**</u>   **Interview**
1 Excerpt :
R1: *"I also try to include some ICT works in the activity. When students become active and engagedthey will learn better. So, I will use PowerPoint slides, and YouTube videos to make learning morefun and meaningful."*

Interview 3 Excerpt :
R3:*"I also make an effort to incorporate some project-based learning techniques in the exercise. Students will learn more effectively if they are interested and active. Therefore, in order to make studying more enjoyable and worthwhile, I will employ PowerPoint slides and YouTube videos."*

Interview 4 Excerpt :
R4: *"I also try to include some gamification using ICT in the activity to make the students engagethrough the lesson and learn. When students become active and engaged they will learn better. Well, I think these are some of my ways, haha that I used in my class to overcome this problem."*

The teachers widely supported the use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) as the most popular choice of teaching strategy among students. They emphasized that punctuation games, and project-based activities, offer a fun and engaging way to enhance students' punctuationabilities. Active and engaged students learn more effectively through gamification and project- based activities. Respondents 1 and 3 highlighted the positive impact of gamification and project-based activities, such as utilizing PowerPoint slides and YouTube videos, on students' essay writing. Additionally, respondent 4 also pointed out that gamification, particularly punctuation games, encourages students' participation and engagement in learning. The respondents collectively recommended fostering gamification and providing more practice opportunities as effective approaches to mitigate the influence of L1 linguistic features on L2 writing.

Findings and discussion
The research findings suggest that various linguistic features from a learner's first language (L1) can be transferred to their second language (L2), impacting the overall language production and comprehension in L2. Notably, the study identified common linguistic traits susceptible to transfer, including punctuation errors, spelling discrepancies, and the misuse of the verb "to be." In particular, the analysis reveals instances of capital letters within phrases containing common nouns, which deviates from the norms of the Tamil writing system. Furthermore, certain writing conventions, like capitalizing proper nouns and employing hyphenation for compound nouns, are absent in Tamil, leading to potential errors when Tamil speakers write in English. Additionally, gender misidentification errors occurred, leading to the inappropriate use of pronouns in L2 essays.Accurate use of pronouns "he" and "she" depends on understanding the subject's gender and employing the appropriate pronoun accordingly. For instance, referring to a female teacher as "he"instead of "she" due to attractive personality traits reflects linguistic transfer issues.
In addition, spelling errors were prevalent in the essays written by the students, due to the differences in language conventions between Tamil and English. In Tamil, the spelling of a word follows its pronunciation, while English lacks this direct sound-symbol correspondence. As Tamilspeakers, the students applied the spelling norms of their native language to English terms, leading to spelling inaccuracies. Furthermore, the 'be' verb usage presented

challenges for the students. In Tamil, verbs are often inferred from the context, while in English, they play a crucial role in expressing actions and states. As a result, the students frequently omitted the 'be' verb due to theirfamiliarity with Tamil grammar, which does not require the placement of 'be' verbs between a subject and an adjective. Besides that, interviews with the L1 and L2 teachers further unveiled thatstudents tend to overgeneralize the 'be' verb rules. This tendency arose from their enthusiasm to apply the newly acquired rules as frequently as possible, regardless of their accuracy in its application.

Additionally, the researchers discovered that the students also exhibited tense errors in their L2 writing influenced by their mother tongue. The Tamil language employs three primary tenses, while English has a more complex system with twelve tenses. This discrepancy in tense structures can lead to confusion for the students, as they may find it challenging to select the appropriate tense without intermingling elements from their mother tongue. As a result, maintaining consistent and accurate tense usage in their English essays becomes a difficulty. The students also demonstrated subject-verb agreement errors in their essays, often using plural verbs with singular subjects and vice versa. These errors may arise from difficulties in recognizing the appropriate verb form whenphrases or clauses separate the subject and verb. Furthermore, the students made errors in using pronouns due to the influence of their mother tongue. Among the ten essays analyzed, only three instances of pronoun reference errors were identified.

The second area of research focuses on mitigating the influence of L1 linguistic features on L2 writing. The findings suggest several strategies to mitigate this impact. Firstly, regular essay writing practice is crucial for non-native learners to improve their punctuation skills. Teachers play a significant role in establishing a consistent writing schedule in the L2 and encouraging students todedicate time for daily writing practice, focusing on specific areas of improvement. Secondly, utilizing various language acquisition tools, such as writing prompts, exercises, and online forums,allows students to practice and receive feedback from native speakers or language teachers. Thirdly, students should dedicate time to master the grammatical rules of the L2, including verb forms, sentence structure, word order, articles, prepositions, and other important aspects. Moreover, the L1 and L2 interviewees also emphasized the importance of identifying specific errors in learners' work and providing explanations for the correct usage, rather than simply pointing out mistakes.

In conclusion, the research findings highlight the significant impact of linguistic transfer from the learners' first language (L1) to their second language (L2), particularly evident in punctuation, spelling, verb usage, subject-verb agreement, and pronoun errors. The study sheds light on the challenges faced by Tamil-speaking students when writing in English due to the structural and grammatical differences between the two languages. Besides that, language instructors are advisedto adopt efficacious approaches, such as providing more essay writing exercises, incorporating language acquisition resources, and providing precise evaluations, to enhance learners' proficiency in their L2 writing. Moreover, integrating captivating games can promote an engaging learning atmosphere and help students master punctuation rules. These findings contribute valuable insightsfor language educators in supporting L2 writing development.

Conclusion
The study reveals that the most prevalent errors occurred in three main areas: punctuation (capitalization), spelling, and the absence of the verb "to be" in sentences. Some of these flaws canbe attributed to language transfer from the learners' native (L1) and second (L2)

languages. Consequently, students often produce error-laden statements due to the grammatical disparities between Tamil and English. The significant linguistic differences between the two languages contribute to the difficulties encountered by learners, especially in their L2 writing. Based on the research findings, it is crucial for Tamil ESL students to engage in regular essay writing practices to enhance their punctuation skills effectively. Establishing a consistent writing routine, dedicating daily time for practice, and focusing on areas that require improvement are essential steps. Language acquisition tools like prompts, exercises, and online forums should be utilized to practice and receive valuable feedback. Mastering the grammatical rules of the L2 language can be achieved through the use of textbooks, online resources, or language learning apps. Teachers should identify and explain the mistakes in students' work to aid their understanding. Furthermore, incorporating punctuation practice in the form of engaging games can make the learning process more enjoyable and stimulating.

Recommendations

Based on the research findings, it is highly recommended that the Ministry of Education of Malaysia takes proactive steps in organizing English workshops to provide essential support for instructors, students, and parents in honing their speaking and writing skills. English language teachers should develop a well-structured approach that highlights the distinctions between Tamil and English, particularly focusing on common errors made by students in L2 writing. Creating awareness about the challenges of literal translation can serve as a motivating factor for students to invest more effort in their studies and improve their English proficiency. Teachers should allocate ample time for meaningful interactions with students while incorporating online platforms to foster interest and engagement in learning a second language. Furthermore, future research endeavors should expand the scope by increasing the sample size and duration, exploring similar studies in Chinese schools, and considering professional development programs for teachers. These efforts will undoubtedly contribute to enhancing L1 to L2 English writing proficiency among Tamil school students and equip them better for their academic journey.

Implications

This research centers on the educational ramifications of writing difficulties faced by Tamil students when writing in English, offering significant perspectives into their overall academic progress. The findings highlight distinct grammatical patterns and lexicons in students' L1 and L2 English usage, emphasizing the importance of solid comprehension of linguistic characteristics in
both languages to produce proficient sentences. Therefore, teachers are encouraged to prioritize grammar and writing structures, catering to the unique aspects of grammar and writing in both languages to foster effective language learning. Furthermore, this study also emphasizes that students' deficiencies in English grammar and vocabulary hinder their ability to write effectively in the language. This finding empowers English teachers to enhance their expertise and support students in developing proficient English writing skills. The primary obstacle identified in effective English writing is the students' limited understanding of grammar and vocabulary, which hinders their expressive capabilities in English. These insights offer valuable guidance for teachers to improve the students' English language proficiency and facilitate their writing competence. In essence, this research offers valuable insights for educators to improve Tamil students' English writing abilities. By

recognizing the linguistic disparities and providing targeted support, teachers can foster students' progress in L2 writing and enhance their overall academic development. Integrating these findings into teacher training and educational policies helps to create a comprehensive approach to cultivate effective writing skills and enrich students' English languagelearning experiences.

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