

Usage of Prepositions among Tamil Vernacular School Students Based on Corder's Error Analysis Theory (1973)

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Abstract

In Malaysia, students from Tamil vernacular school adopt Malay language as their second language, while the primary language used in teaching and learning is the Tamil language. One of the grammatical elements of Malay language included in the field of morphology is function words (*kata tugas*) which consist of seventeen types, and one of them is prepositions. Students encounter difficulties in the usage of prepositions "dari" and "daripada", leading to frequent grammatical errors in their writing. Consequently, this study is conducted to identify and discuss errors in the use of the prepositions "dari" and "daripada" among Tamil vernacular school students. The study is based on Corder's Error Analysis Theory (1973), focusing on the two language errors made by students, which are the selection of unnecessary and inaccurate elements in answering questions. The study sample consists of a total of 50 Year 5 students from the Ladang Highlands Tamil vernacular school, Klang. Data is collected through a survey method, using a questionnaire related to the usage of the prepositions "dari" and "daripada" as the research instrument. The findings indicate that students do not fully understand the usage of the prepositions "dari" and "daripada." The highest errors made by students for the preposition "dari" that are related to locational function, with 11 students equivalent to 22% of the students chose the wrong answer. Meanwhile, for the preposition "daripada," the highest errors occur in its function related to the source of origin with 25 students equivalent to 50% of the students selected the wrong answer. Therefore, this study is essential to assist educators in improving students' understanding of the prepositions "dari" and "daripada" in their writing.

Keywords: Prepositions, "Dari", "Daripada", Corder's Error Analysis Theory, Tamil Vernacular School

Background

Malay language serves as the medium of instruction in the country's education sector, a language that was planned and developed before the nation gained independence. This statement is supported by various declarations and reports such as the Barnes Statement in 1950, the Fenn-Wu Statement in 1951, the Razak Report in 1956, and others. According to the Razak Report Committee (1956) and Article 152 of the Federal Constitution, Malay language is mandated for use in government-aided schools. Consequently, the Malay language subject holds its own value, aligning with the National Education Policy's goal of making Malay language a unifying tool for the diverse population in the country (Azman and Rusli, 2020). The Vision 2020 is believed to provide room for educational reforms, along with the National Education Policy formulated at that time with approval from various parties, including academics and non-academics, to elevate the status of the Malay language (Nor Ain Nor Azman and Nur Farakhanna Mohd Rusli, 2020). The challenge of mastering Malay language continues to be a constraint for student who learn Malay language as their second language, despite Malaysia achieving independence 60 years ago (Amirra and Vijayaletchumy, 2019). Therefore, this study focuses on identifying and discussing errors in the usage of the Malay language prepositions "*dari*" and "*dari pada*" based on Corder's Error Analysis Theory (1973) among Tamil National Type School students which contributes to the problems in mastery Malay language as whole. This study is of particular importance to students, educators, and Malay language users in general. The previous study conducted by Nor Azman and Rusli (2020) examined the level of understanding of the usage of the prepositions "*dari*" and "*dari pada*" among students and explained the errors in using these prepositions based solely on Corder's Error Analysis Theory introduced by (Corder, 1981). However, they failed to provide a solution to the problem of correct usage of the prepositions "*dari*" and "*dari pada*." Therefore, this study was carried out to fill the gap in previous research on the correct usage of the prepositions "*dari*" and "*dari pada*".

According to Standard Curriculum and Assessment Documents (2023), Malay language learning in primary schools focus on the development of literacy skills, with an emphasis on understanding and applying basic language aspects in Malay. In the early stages, namely Year 1, Year 2, and Year 3, the focus is on developing skills at the basic level such as listening, speaking, reading, and writing, fully implemented in the teaching and learning process in schools. In the subsequent stages, namely Year 4, Year 5, and Year 6, Malay language learning emphasizes strengthening literacy and applying language skills, enabling students to become more proficient in both spoken and written language. Malay grammar falls under the aspect of Malay language skills that every user must master efficiently and effectively to learn the language well (Solehah et al., 2023). In this regard, this study is conducted to assess the ability to use one of the elements of grammar in Malay, which is included in the morphological field, namely function words, specifically prepositions. Function words fall into the category of words with various or heterogeneous types, meaning that these words cannot be the core of endocentric phrases consisting of noun phrases, verb phrases, and adjective phrases (Karim et al., 2015). According to the *Tatabahasa Dewan* (2015), the basic sentence construction in Malay language consists of two main constituents, namely subject and predicate. The elements forming these two main constituents not only consist of noun phrases, verb phrases, and adjective phrases but also include prepositional phrases. Function words will appear in sentences, clauses, or phrases to support specific syntactic functions, serving as connectors, modifiers, determiners, enhancers, prepositions, helpers, affirmers, negators, validators,

givers, or other functions. Prepositions are encapsulated in the group of prepositional words because prepositions are words located in front of noun phrases (Karim et al., 2015). Therefore, prepositions are also referred to as the front word. Prepositions play a role in determining the meaning of a sentence in Malay language. Generally referring to the *Tatabahasa Dewan* (2015), the preposition "*dari*" is used in front of nouns or noun phrases that indicate direction, place, and time, while the preposition "*daripada*" is used in front of nouns or noun phrases that indicate abstract concepts, sources, objects, people, comparisons, and changes. Mastery of the use of prepositions can be enhanced more efficiently when viewed and evaluated in a broader context that can be understood by primary school students who are just beginning their journey in learning Malay grammar.

Problem Statement

The issue faced by most students in Tamil vernacular school is confusion in identifying and correctly using prepositions "*dari*" and "*daripada*" in sentence writing. According to a study by Azman and Rusli (2020), errors in the use of prepositions "*dari*" and "*daripada*" occur because students are still uncertain about the correct functions of these prepositions. One of the factors contributing to mistakes in choosing between "*dari*" and "*daripada*" is the uncertainty about their exact functions and confusion when making assumptions, ultimately leading to errors in selecting the appropriate preposition.

Furthermore, most teachers do not fully emphasize the correct usage of prepositions "*dari*" and "*daripada*" due to the absence of a robust usage method. This lack of emphasis may lead to students consistently being confused about the proper use of these prepositions. The problems faced by these students represent grammatical errors that need correction to encourage proper Malay grammar usage among the primary school students. If not corrected during primary school, these mistakes may persist, thus affecting students even in secondary school.

The incorrect usage of prepositions "*dari*" and "*daripada*" can have various impacts on students. One of these is that the quality of a student's writing may be compromised if errors in using these prepositions are frequent. According to Alizuddin and Athirah (2021), improper grammar usage in Malay can result in grammatically incorrect discourse as it violates established Malay grammar rules. Additionally, Adzwa et al (2020) suggest in their research that teaching grammar is crucial for students in preparation for exams conducted in school. The question then arises, what are effective methods that students can use to understand and use the prepositions "*dari*" and "*daripada*" correctly?

The past study conducted by Azman and Rusli (2020) examined the level of understanding regarding the usage of prepositions "*dari*" and "*daripada*" among students. It explained errors in the usage of these prepositions based on the Error Analysis Theory introduced by Corder (1981) in a general sense. However, it did not analyze errors in the usage of "*dari*" and "*daripada*" among language users who use Malay as their second language. Therefore, this current study is undertaken to fill the gap in previous research by specifically focusing on students from Tamil vernacular school. This is crucial for addressing grammar issues among these second language learner students and simultaneously enhancing the status of the Malay language.

Methodology

The researcher employed the mixed-method approach in this study, incorporating both qualitative and quantitative methods. Qualitative data was collected to assess the mastery level of using prepositions "dari" and "daripada" through the use of a questionnaire. The collected data was then transformed into pie charts using a quantitative method to provide a clearer and more organized presentation of students' proficiency levels with prepositions "dari" and "daripada" based on their specific functions. Survey methods were used to determine the proficiency level of prepositions "dari" and "daripada" among the respondents. The questionnaire was completed by 50 Year 5 students from Ladang Highlands Tamil vernacular school. The researcher chose to conduct the study at a prominent Tamil school in the Selangor region and Klang district, namely Ladang Highlands Tamil vernacular school, Selangor.

Finding and Discussion

The study of prepositions "dari" and "daripada" is analyzed based on the Error Analysis Theory by Corder (1973), following the roles and functions of these prepositions according to the Malay language grammar system. The preposition "dari" is used for directional, locational, and temporal functions, while the preposition "daripada" is used for abstract, origin, object, person, change, and comparison functions.

Table 1

Preposition "Dari"

Item	Statement	Correct (%)	Wrong (%)
1.	<i>Kereta api itu bergerak dari utara.</i>	86	14
2.	<i>Pendatang asing itu dari negara jiran.</i>	78	22
3.	<i>Kamal menunggu Vijay dari pukul lapan pagi.</i>	92	8

Based on Table 1, item 1, the use of the preposition "dari" for directional functions shows a good level of mastery, with 86%, equivalent to 43 out of 50 students, answering correctly. The remaining 14%, or 7 students, were found to answer incorrectly by choosing the preposition "daripada". This indicates that there are students who still do not grasp the usage of the preposition "dari" for directional purposes, such as the direction of north (*utara*) used in this question. According to Corder's Error Analysis Theory (1973), the language error made by students in this question is the selection of inaccurate elements due to confusion. Students misunderstand that directional functions can only be used with the preposition "daripada" and not "dari". Examples of directions that can be explained in this concept include north, south, east, west, as well as other directions such as left corner, right corner, and so on. Students need to understand that various types of directions can be used with the preposition "dari" for a proper and accurate mastery of prepositions.

Based on item 2, the usage of the preposition "dari" to describe a particular place indicates 78% accuracy, with 39 students answering correctly. On the other hand, 22%, or 11 students, selected the wrong answer, which is the preposition "daripada". This error clearly demonstrates that these students have not mastered the functions of the preposition "dari", especially when used for the locational function. The location mentioned in this item is a neighboring country, clearly indicating a specific location or destination. Students who made mistakes in this question misunderstood that the statement neighboring country (*negara*

jiran) does not refer to a place. Therefore, the language error in selecting the answer for this question can be linked to the students' lack of carefulness when using language (Corder, 1973). The language error in this question stems from language deviation due to the students' confusion about the function of "dari" in describing a place. Students need to understand the locational function and examples of places to master the preposition "dari" accurately.

The preposition "dari" for the temporal function used in item 3 shows the highest mastery among students, with 92%, or 46 students, selecting the correct answer. However, 8%, or 4 students, made errors in this seemingly easy question. According to Corder's Error Analysis Theory (1973), the mistakes in this question result from the selection of incorrect elements. In this context, the errors stem from confusion in choosing between the prepositions "dari" and "daripada". Students who chose the answer "daripada" for this question are uncertain about the usage of the preposition "dari". The key element in this question for the temporal function is eight o'clock (*pukul lapan*), clearly indicating a specific time. Temporal functions can be classified into various examples, such as time represented by numbers like eight in the morning (*pukul lapan pagi*) and broader time categories like morning, afternoon, evening, and night. Students need to have a clear understanding of the concepts of time and temporal functions to master the preposition "dari". Based on the analysis, the researcher concluded that the majority of respondents, i.e., students, comprehend the temporal function of the preposition "dari" in sentences indicating time.

Table 2

Preposition "Daripada"

Item	Statement	Correct (%)	Wrong (%)
1.	<i>Kami memperoleh manfaat daripada nasihat Cikgu Yati.</i>	80	20
2.	<i>Minyak daripada gamat itu boleh mengubat luka.</i>	50	50
3.	<i>Ayah mengambil buku daripada laci.</i>	95	5
4.	<i>Hadiah itu daripada rakan karibnya, Afiq.</i>	78	22
5.	<i>Suhu musim panas meningkat daripada 30 °C kepada 40 °C.</i>	68	32
6.	<i>Nisa lebih bijak daripada Nazirah.</i>	74	26

Based on Table 2, item 1, the level of mastery of the preposition "daripada" for abstract functions is 80%, with 40 students answering correctly, while 20% of students, namely 10 students, did not answer correctly. The key word used in this question is advice (*nasihat*), which clearly indicates about abstract. According to the *Kamus Dewan* (2015), abstract refers to something that is not tangible or material. Students still do not understand the meaning of abstracts, leading to language errors. According to Corder's Analysis Theory (1973), students make language errors by selecting unnecessary elements due to a lack of mastery of the meaning of abstract words. Students need to understand the meaning of abstraction and examples of abstraction to master the preposition "daripada".

Item 2 uses the preposition "daripada" to indicate the source of origin, showing that 50% of students, equivalent to 25 students, answered correctly, while the remaining 50% of students, also 25 students, answered incorrectly. This study indicates that half of the students do not

master the preposition "*daripada*" for the function of indicating the source of origin. The origin function refers to the origin of the occurrence of something. The misunderstanding of students regarding the meaning and examples of the source of origin has confused them, leading them to choose the preposition "*dari*" for this question. The keyword used in this question is about origin of the oil, (*gamat*) which is the source of origin for the oil referred to in the item. According to Corder's Error Analysis Theory (1973), students choose inaccurate elements because they are not careful during the selection of answers, resulting in language errors. The language errors in this question are due to confusion, which is a deviation in language use experienced by students.

In item 3, the preposition "*daripada*," which functions to describe an object, shows the highest mastery with 95% of students, or 46 students, answering correctly, and only 5%, or 4 students, choosing the incorrect preposition "*dari*". This error clearly indicates that a few students do not master the functions of the preposition "*daripada*", especially for the function related to objects, which are considered straightforward. The object used in this question is a drawer, clearly indicating a tangible item. Students who made mistakes in this question confused the statement about the drawer, considering it as a place. In this case, the language error in selecting the answer for this question involves choosing unnecessary elements and can be associated with the factor of students not being careful when using language (Corder, 1973). The language error in this question stems from a language deviation that occurs due to the students' confusion about the function of objects for the preposition "*daripada*".

Item 4 indicates a satisfactory level of mastery for the preposition "*daripada*" in the context of its function with people, with 78% of students, or 39 students out of 50, answering correctly. Another 22% of students, 11 students, were found to answer incorrectly by choosing the preposition "*dari*". This suggests that many students still do not grasp the usage of the preposition "*daripada*" for people, such as friends, parents, and others. The friend, Afiq, used in this item clearly indicates that the keyword of this question is based on a person, hence the preposition "*daripada*" should be used. According to Corder's Error Analysis Theory (1973), the language error made by students in this question is the selection of inaccurate elements due to a factor of confusion. Students are unsure that they need to use the preposition "*daripada*" instead of "*dari*" for the function related to people. Students need to understand that when referring to people, the preposition "*daripada*" should be used for proper and accurate preposition mastery.

The mastery level for the preposition "*daripada*" in the function of change, as in item 5, indicates a less satisfactory level, with only 68% of students, equivalent to 34 students, answering correctly. Another 32% of students, 16 students, were found to answer incorrectly by choosing the preposition "*dari*". This indicates that some students are not familiar with and have a limited understanding of the usage of the preposition "*daripada*" to indicate change. According to Corder's Error Analysis Theory (1973), the language errors made by students in this question involve the selection of inaccurate elements due to factors of mistakes and errors. Errors occur due to deviations in language use, namely not recognizing the function of change, which can only be indicated by the preposition "*dari*" and not "*daripada*". The change explained in this concept could be a temperature change. Errors made in this question can alter the meaning of the question and lead to confusion. Students

need to understand that functions indicating change from one thing to another can use the preposition "*daripada*" for proper and accurate preposition mastery.

Item 6 about the usage of preposition "*daripada*" for comparison, shows similar results to the data for the change function. 74% of students, or 37 students, answered this question correctly, while 26% of students, 13 students, made mistakes in this question. According to Corder's Error Analysis Theory (1973), the errors made in this question involve the selection of inaccurate elements due to uncertainty in choosing between the prepositions "*dari*" or "*daripada*". Students who chose the answer "*dari*" for this question are uncertain about the comparison function. The preposition "*daripada*" needs to be used to compare one thing with another. The comparison made in this question is the comparison of wisdom between two students. The keyword in this question for the comparison function is *lebih bijak*, clearly indicating a comparison between the smartness level of two students. Students need to be clear about the concept of comparison to master the preposition "*daripada*". Based on the analysis, the researcher concluded that the respondents have a limited mastery of the change and comparison functions.

Discussion

Analysis of Errors in the Use of Preposition "*Dari*"

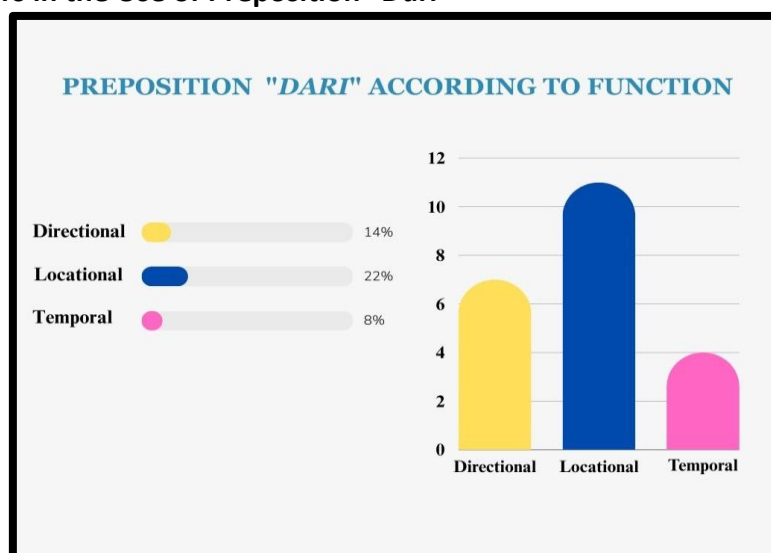


Diagram 1: Comparison Chart of Prepositions "*Dari*" According to Function

Overall, the analysis indicates that students have not yet mastered the preposition "*dari*" for all the functions. The use of the preposition "*dari*" for the function of locational shows the highest error rate, with 11 students making language errors, followed by the directional function, with 7 students. The function of temporal exhibits the highest mastery, with only 4 students making errors in that question. According to Corder's Error Analysis Theory (1973), language errors made by students involve the selection of unnecessary and inaccurate elements. However, these language errors can be corrected by addressing them appropriately. Based on the study conducted by Azman and Nur Farakhanna (2020), the research results indicate that errors in the use of the preposition "*dari*" should not occur among students because the directional, locational, and temporal functions present in the Malay language are easy to identify, especially when a sentence uses a predicate noun or

noun phrase. However, Corder (1981) states that errors are indeed unavoidable in the language learning process. Mastery of vocabulary is essential for students to avoid language errors.

Analysis of Errors in the Use of Preposition "*Daripada*"

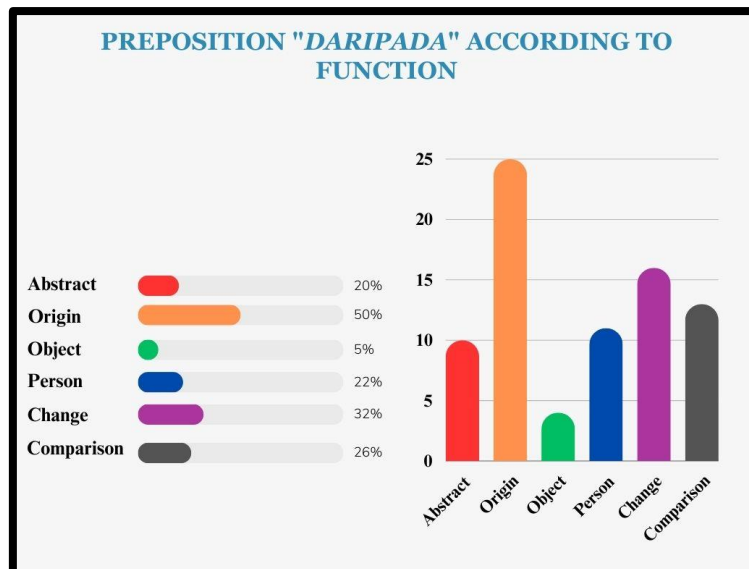


Diagram 2: Comparison Chart of Prepositions "*Daripada*" According to Function

Overall, the analysis indicates that students also have not yet mastered the preposition "*daripada*" for all functions as there are errors made by students for each function. The use of the preposition "*daripada*" for the function of origin shows the highest error rate, with 25 students making errors, followed by the function of change with 16 students, and then the comparison function with 13 students making errors in answer selection. The function related to person shows 11 students making language errors, followed by the abstract function, with 10 students selecting inaccurate elements. The function related to objects exhibits the highest mastery, with only 4 students making errors in that question. Azman and Farakhanna (2020) also state in their research that students experience confusion when using the preposition "*daripada*" as presented in the research question. Furthermore, there are students who substitute the use of the preposition "*daripada*" with "*dari*," as discussed earlier. According to Corder's Error Analysis Theory (1973), the theory used has the potential to provide information about the causes of language usage problems among students. However, these language errors can be corrected by addressing them appropriately and warrants full attention, especially from teachers.

Conclusion

All in all, this study was conducted to unravel the errors in the use of the prepositions "*dari*" and "*daripada*" committed by Tamil vernacular school students. The study employed Corder's Error Analysis Theory (1973) to facilitate the analysis of the common errors made by students in using the prepositions "*dari*" and "*daripada*". According to Corder's Error Analysis Theory (1973), the frequent errors made by students involve the selection of unnecessary and inaccurate elements. The findings of the study conclude that students have not yet mastered the correct usage of the prepositions "*dari*" and "*daripada*". Therefore, appropriate methods for understanding and remembering the functions of these prepositions, along with

reinforcement exercises, are necessary to address this issue. Additionally, Corder (1973) states that errors are essential for three groups: educators, to indicate developmental progress; researchers, to demonstrate language acquisition methods; and students, who can learn from the language errors they make. Through this study, teachers can identify and rectify the types of errors made in students' preposition usage, ensuring that mistakes in usage of prepositions are no longer repeated by students particularly primary school students to prevent this language problem from persisting into the secondary school level.

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