

## **Past Tense Errors of Undergraduates in Learning Tamil as a Second Language: A Case Study**

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Undergraduates who have been learning Tamil as a second Language for years, their written compositions have proved inability to perform correct grammatical features in the appropriate function. The purpose of this study is to identify the common grammatical errors of the past tense verbs in spoken Tamil and the causes for this situation. It describes and pin-points the areas of difficulty that the speakers of Sinhalese language have in learning Tamil as a Second Language. There are number of regional and social dialects existing in both Tamil and Sinhala. However, the Tamil data represent the author's own dialect, the Jaffna Tamil which is a socio-regional sub-dialect of Sri Lankan Tamil. The Sinhala data represent the Colombo dialect of Sinhala. The fifty students were selected for this present study are the students who are following first and second year Translation studies of the Department of Linguistics, University of Kelaniya and the First Language of the above students is Sinhalese. Due to the interference of their First Language students tend to perform many errors in Tenses. The data was collected by studying the answer scripts of the above students. Fifty answer scripts were analyzed using the theory of error analysis. This study involves the methodology of contrastive and descriptive analysis of morphological structure of past tense verbs in Tamil and Sinhala, in order to establish the facts that there are similarities and dissimilarities in the two languages. It is believed that this study of this kind would facilitate the teachers' task of preparing teaching materials and to identify students' difficulties in learning Tamil as a second language. Further, it will reduce the students' burden of learning Tamil as a second language. Furthermore, this study will encourage other scholars to undertake more research work in this field.

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