

Investigating English Language Learning Strategies used by ESL Lower Secondary Students from Tamil School Background

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Abstract

Learners of English as a Second Language (ESL) in Malaysia, particularly those from Tamil School background, face substantial linguistic challenges due to the nation's multilingual and multicultural educational environment. These students transition from a primary school system that may primarily use Tamil or Malay to a secondary education system centered on English, creating a steep language learning curve. This quantitative survey research explores language learning strategies among lower secondary students from Tamil School background. Utilizing a survey instrument adapted from the Language Strategy Use Inventory, the study investigates techniques for speaking, reading, writing, and listening skills. Employing WhatsApp and Google Forms for data collection facilitated the systematic gathering of responses from participants. Through descriptive and correlational analyses, the study elucidates prevalent language learning practices and provides valuable insights into the strategies employed by students in this educational context. The findings highlight the diversity of approaches utilized by learners, shedding light on factors influencing language acquisition and proficiency development. Moreover, the study underscores the significance of tailored language learning interventions and inclusive teaching methodologies to address the specific needs of students from Tamil School background. By illuminating the landscape of language learning strategies in this demographic, the research contributes to a deeper understanding of language education practices and informs the development of effective pedagogical approaches to support ESL learners in their language learning journey.

Keywords: ESL learners, Language Learning Strategies, Direct Strategy, Indirect Strategy

Introduction

Learners of English as a Second Language (ESL) in Malaysia are confronted with substantial linguistic obstacles because of the multilingual and multicultural educational environment of the nation. These students often go from a primary school system that may primarily employ Malay, Tamil or Chinese to a secondary education system that is centered on English, which results in a steep language learning curve being a part of their educational experience. While the variety of the educational scene in Malaysia is fascinating, it also creates unique challenges for these students. They are required to navigate and understand English, which is an important worldwide lingua franca, in addition to their original languages and Bahasa Malaysia, which is the official language (Paramasivam, 2013).

Malaysian students are facing more challenges in learning English Language due to insufficient learning of English especially from Tamil School background. This can be due to some reasons which includes their nature of language learning, the set of conditions they are experiencing, their learning strategies, motivation and the teaching strategy used in the classroom. Language Learning Strategies are important to help students in achieving their language learning goals. The use of language learning strategies in language learning can be a learning process for students as well as self-regulating. Therefore, teachers need to provide the needed training and guidance for students to improve their self-learning abilities. Thus, a Language Learning Strategies Questionnaire proposed by Oxford had been used to collect relevant information on each respondent's language skills need based on the learning strategies applied in the classroom.

This research focuses on investigating the variety of Language learning strategies used by lower secondary students from Tamil schools. The researcher can find out how students manage to suit themselves into language learning through the application of approaches and methods. At the same time, it helps us to grasp the effectiveness of each strategy used by students and pick out the trends that might appear among learners. This research aims to help in improving the language learning quality and motivates teachers to come up with effective ideas and techniques for students to begin their language journey in lower secondary.

Literature Review

Language Learning Strategies

To achieve a good learning, every student needs to know their respective learning strategies. This learning process is very important especially for students as it will help them discover the learning strategies that suit themselves during the learning process, as cited by (Abdul Karim et al., 2003). The reason is because whatever learning strategies applied by students contributes to their educational achievement. Oxford (1990) defines Language Learning Strategy as someone's actions, behaviours, techniques, and steps which were being applied by students to improve their understanding in language learning aimed at.

According to Chien (2010), LLS is a process of learning and receiving a language no matter if it is a second language, mother tongue or a foreign language. An understanding on this process do help students to categorize the formal practices of language which includes the use of grammar, the use of language to communicate and helps them to guess the meaning of words they hardly understand (Cohen et al., 2002). Embi (2000) argued that when a variety of

strategies were used by learners to acquire a language, it will make them a successful language learner. In the other hand, Oxford (1990) discussed on the importance of strategy learning which helps students to be a self-directed learner. This can motivate students to learn without being instructed. The knowledge gained through Language Learning Strategy can notably help in the improvement of teaching and learning process (Sani & Ismail, 2021).

Direct and Indirect Strategy

Chien (2010), Brown and Palinscar, and O'Malle et al. had same opinion on the classification of Language Learning Strategies by dividing LLS into three major strategies as Cognitive, Metacognitive and Social-affective strategies. Meanwhile, Oxford (1990) improvised this classification with only 2 strategies which are direct and indirect strategies. Three strategies had been classified under direct strategies which include memory strategy, cognitive strategy, and compensation strategy (Oxford, 1990). Memory strategy is used to remember, regain, and transmit them to an appropriate skill level. It is being done with connections of mental to ease memory by using images, sounds, actions, and physical movements. Next will be cognitive strategy which is linked to students on how they think about their learning process and this strategy works by practicing, receiving, and transmitting messages while making guesses on meaning of words. Last will be compensation strategy which refers to the behaviours when using a new language to replace words due to lack of vocabulary skills. This strategy helps students who have limited access to language knowledge and vocabulary to learn to make assumptions wisely during conversation and writing.

As for indirect strategies, Oxford (1990) categorized another three strategies under it which are metacognitive, affective, and social strategy. Metacognitive strategy focuses on how students control their learning. Students find information by acquiring the language, arrange their study patterns, setting a goal and control their learning. Meanwhile, affective strategy is more related to students' feelings and emotions on learning. This strategy helps to lower students' anxiety level during learning. Lastly, social learning strategies encourage students to interact with others for help in acquiring the language. It focuses on activities that involve another person like asking questions and working with others.

Methodology

Research Design

A quantitative method was used in this investigation. Creswell (2017) defined quantitative research as a kind of study that used numerical data collected through mathematical analysis to understand events. A set of questionnaire with regards to language learning techniques based on the four language abilities of speaking, reading, writing, and listening was used. The questions were modified from the Language Strategy Use inventory created by Cohen, Oxford, and Chi (2005). The pupils were given these surveys to complete via WhatsApp by their school teachers from Tamil School background, who created them in a Google form.

Population and Sampling

The population and sampling strategy adhered to the principles of random sampling, considering the availability of students. Following McCabe's (1993) assertion that random samples offer the most credible evidence for decision-making and bias reduction, 30 respondents were selected as the sample size for this investigation. The research specifically focused on Form 1 students in secondary schools with Tamil school background within the

within the dataset. Additionally, correlation and regression analyses were conducted to explore potential associations between various learning skills and language-related abilities. These analyses provide essential insights into the characteristics and experiences of the sampled population, laying the groundwork for understanding the factors influencing language learning strategies and outcomes.

Demographic Profile

The descriptive analysis of the respondent data provides valuable insights into the sample population and allows researchers to understand various demographic characteristics.

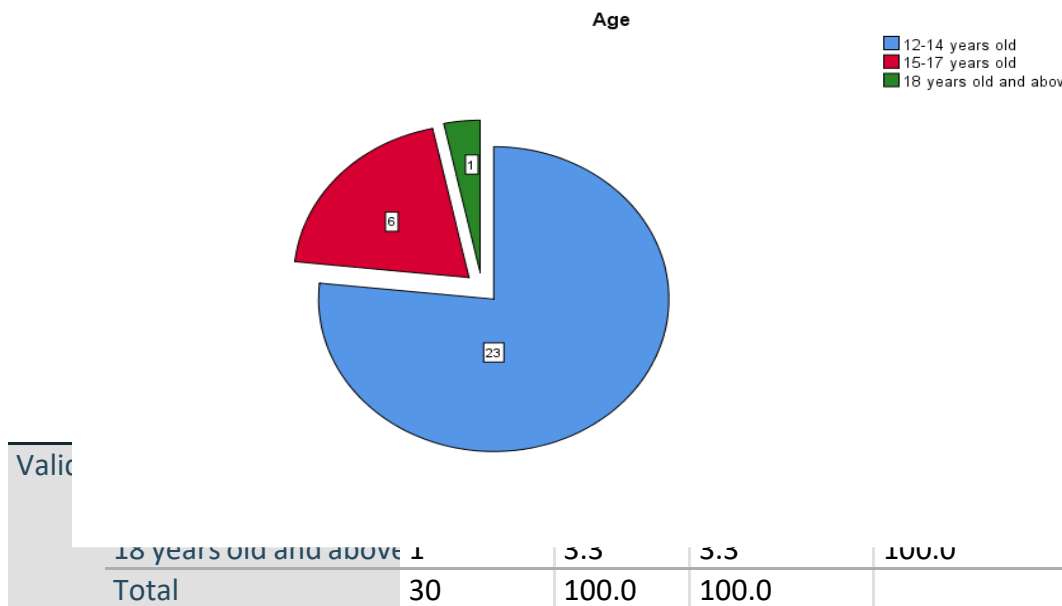
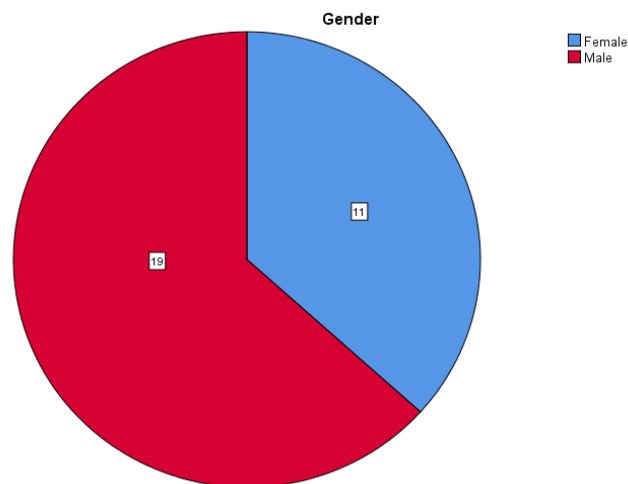


Figure 1. Age

The distribution of ESL lower secondary learners from Tamil School background across different age groups reveals interesting insights into language learning strategies. The majority, comprising 76.7%, fall within the 12-14 years age range, indicating a significant concentration of learners in the early adolescent years. This suggests that language learning interventions and support programs should particularly target this age group, recognizing their developmental stage and specific learning needs. With the adolescent brain undergoing rapid cognitive and linguistic development, tailored strategies can enhance language acquisition and proficiency effectively. However, it's also notable that a minority, representing 20.0%, belong to the 15-17 years age bracket, with a further 3.3% being 18 years old and above. While smaller in number, these older learners shouldn't be overlooked. Their presence underscores the importance of providing language learning opportunities beyond the early adolescent years. Understanding the unique challenges and motivations of these older learners is crucial for designing inclusive language education policies and programs. Strategies aimed at engaging and supporting learners across different age groups within the ESL lower secondary context should be multifaceted, acknowledging the diverse needs and circumstances of each cohort to foster effective language acquisition and proficiency development.



| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|-------|--------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid | Female | 11 | 36.7 | 36.7 | 36.7 |
| | Male | 19 | 63.3 | 63.3 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 30 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

Figure 2. Gender

The gender distribution among ESL lower secondary learners from Tamil School background indicates a slight majority of male learners, comprising 63.3% of the total sample, compared to 36.7% being female. This observation may reflect broader societal trends where male students might be more prevalent in certain educational contexts or subjects. However, it's essential to avoid making assumptions solely based on gender and instead delve deeper into understanding how gender dynamics might influence language learning experiences. Educational stakeholders should consider gender-responsive approaches to ensure equitable access to language learning resources and support for all learners, regardless of gender. Acknowledging the gender imbalance within the ESL lower secondary learner population presents an opportunity to explore gender-sensitive language teaching methodologies. Tailoring language instruction to accommodate diverse learning styles and preferences can foster an inclusive learning environment where both male and female learners feel empowered to participate actively. By addressing potential gender disparities in language learning experiences, educators can promote equal opportunities for all students to develop their language skills and achieve academic success.

Table 1

Listening Skills (F=Frequency, %=Percentage)

| No. | Questions | Always=1 | | Sometimes=2 | | Never=3 | |
|-----|--|----------|------|-------------|------|---------|-----|
| | | F | % | F | % | F | % |
| 1 | When someone speaks in Tamil/English, I pay close attention to their words. | 24 | 80.0 | 6 | 20.0 | 0 | 0 |
| 2 | I try to understand the main idea when listening to Tamil/English conversations. | 12 | 40.0 | 17 | 56.7 | 1 | 3.3 |
| 3 | I ask for clarification if I don't understand something in Tamil/English. | 11 | 36.7 | 18 | 60.0 | 1 | 3.3 |
| 4 | I listen carefully to the tone and intonation when people speak Tamil/English. | 16 | 53.3 | 14 | 46.7 | 0 | 0 |
| 5 | I focus on key words or phrases to grasp the meaning of Tamil/English speech. | 14 | 44.3 | 14 | 46.7 | 2 | 6.7 |
| 6 | I use context clues to help me understand unfamiliar Tamil/English words. | 18 | 60.0 | 12 | 40.0 | 0 | 0 |
| 7 | I visualize what is being said to aid my comprehension in Tamil/English. | 10 | 33.3 | 19 | 63.3 | 1 | 3.3 |
| 8 | I make mental summaries while listening to Tamil/English lectures or speeches. | 19 | 63.3 | 11 | 36.7 | 0 | 0 |
| 9 | I try to anticipate what will be said next during Tamil/English conversations. | 8 | 26.7 | 20 | 66.7 | 2 | 6.7 |
| 10 | I use facial expressions and body language to aid my understanding of Tamil/English. | 18 | 60.0 | 11 | 36.7 | 1 | 3.3 |
| 11 | I listen to Tamil/English music or songs to improve my listening skills. | 11 | 36.7 | 19 | 63.3 | 0 | 0 |
| 12 | I watch Tamil/English movies or videos without subtitles to challenge myself. | 22 | 73.3 | 7 | 23.3 | 1 | 3.3 |
| 13 | I take notes while listening to Tamil/English presentations or lectures. | 10 | 33.3 | 19 | 63.3 | 1 | 3.3 |
| 14 | I repeat key points silently to myself to reinforce understanding in Tamil/English. | 20 | 66.7 | 9 | 30.0 | 1 | 3.3 |

| | | | | | | | |
|----|--|----|------|----|------|---|-----|
| 15 | I use background knowledge to fill in gaps when listening to Tamil/English. | 11 | 36.7 | 19 | 63.3 | 0 | 0 |
| 16 | I listen to Tamil/English radio programs or podcasts regularly. | 19 | 63.3 | 11 | 36.7 | 0 | 0 |
| 17 | I pay attention to non-verbal cues such as gestures and facial expressions in Tamil/English conversations. | 9 | 30.0 | 20 | 66.7 | 1 | 3.3 |
| 18 | I summarize what I've heard after listening to Tamil/English audio recordings. | 21 | 70.0 | 9 | 30.0 | 0 | 0 |
| 19 | I listen for specific details when someone speaks in Tamil/English. | 14 | 46.7 | 16 | 53.3 | 0 | 0 |
| 20 | I engage in active listening by responding appropriately during Tamil/English conversations. | 21 | 70.0 | 9 | 30.0 | 0 | 0 |

The survey results indicate varied levels of engagement and strategies used by individuals when listening to Tamil/English. A significant majority (80%) always pay close attention to the words spoken, and many (70%) consistently engage in active listening and summarize what they've heard. Despite this, only 40% always try to understand the main idea during conversations, while 56.7% sometimes do so. Clarification is frequently sought, with 60% sometimes asking for it, and a notable portion (53.3%) always listening for specific details. Tone and intonation are always considered by 53.3%, and visualization is sometimes used by 63.3% to aid comprehension. Context clues are a common strategy, with 60% always using them. While 66.7% sometimes anticipate what will be said next, a majority (60%) always focus on non-verbal cues, listen to radio programs or podcasts, and use body language for understanding. Watching movies without subtitles is a popular method for 73.3%, and repeating key points silently is always done by 66.7%. Mental summaries are always made by 63.3%, and the same percentage sometimes takes notes. Listening to music is less frequent, with 63.3% sometimes doing so. Overall, the data reveals a strong inclination towards using diverse listening strategies, with a preference for active listening, summarization, and the use of non-verbal cues to enhance understanding.

Table 2
Speaking Skills (F=Frequency, %=Percentage)

| No. | Questions | Always=1 | | Sometimes=2 | | Never=3 | |
|-----|--|----------|------|-------------|------|---------|-----|
| | | F | % | F | % | F | % |
| 1 | I actively participate in Tamil/English conversations. | 21 | 70. | 9 | 30.0 | 0 | 0 |
| 2 | I use Tamil/English words and phrases that I've recently learned in conversations. | 18 | 60.0 | 10 | 33.3 | 2 | 6.7 |

| | | | | | | | |
|----|---|----|------|----|------|---|-----|
| 3 | I ask questions to keep Tamil/English conversations going. | 10 | 33.3 | 20 | 66.7 | 0 | 0 |
| 4 | I practice speaking Tamil/English regularly, even if I make mistakes. | 13 | 43.3 | 16 | 53.3 | 1 | 3.3 |
| 5 | I try to speak Tamil/English with correct pronunciation and intonation. | 11 | 36.7 | 19 | 63.3 | 0 | 0 |
| 6 | I seek opportunities to engage in Tamil/English speaking activities outside of the classroom. | 15 | 50.0 | 13 | 43.3 | 2 | 6.7 |
| 7 | I use gestures and facial expressions to support my spoken Tamil/English. | 11 | 36.7 | 18 | 60.0 | 1 | 3.3 |
| 8 | I practice speaking Tamil/English with friends or classmates. | 23 | 76.7 | 6 | 20.0 | 1 | 3.3 |
| 9 | I record myself speaking Tamil/English to assess my pronunciation and fluency. | 9 | 30.0 | 21 | 70.0 | 0 | 0 |
| 10 | I use Tamil/English language apps or websites to practice speaking skills. | 19 | 63.3 | 11 | 36.7 | 0 | 0 |
| 11 | I try to express my ideas clearly and confidently in Tamil/English conversations. | 8 | 26.7 | 22 | 73.3 | 0 | 0 |
| 12 | I make an effort to expand my Tamil/English vocabulary through speaking. | 23 | 76.7 | 7 | 23.3 | 0 | 0 |
| 13 | I pay attention to the feedback I receive on my Tamil/English speaking skills. | 12 | 40.0 | 18 | 60.0 | 0 | 0 |
| 14 | I engage in role-plays or simulations to practice speaking in Tamil/English. | 20 | 66.7 | 9 | 30.0 | 1 | 3.3 |

| | | | | | | | |
|----|---|----|------|----|------|---|-----|
| 15 | I use Tamil/English idiomatic expressions appropriately in conversations. | 12 | 40.0 | 17 | 56.7 | 1 | 3.3 |
| 16 | I seek out native Tamil/English speakers to practice speaking with. | 17 | 56.7 | 12 | 40.0 | 1 | 3.3 |
| 17 | I participate in Tamil/English speaking contests or debates. | 9 | 30.0 | 21 | 70.0 | 0 | 0 |
| 18 | I reflect on my speaking performance and set goals for improvement. | 15 | 50.0 | 14 | 46.7 | 1 | 3.3 |

The survey results reveal that a significant portion of participants actively engage in Tamil/English conversations, with 70% always participating and 60% always using recently learned words and phrases. Many (66.7%) sometimes ask questions to keep conversations going, and a majority (53.3%) practice speaking regularly despite potential mistakes. Correct pronunciation and intonation are sometimes focused on by 63.3%, and half (50%) seek speaking opportunities outside the classroom. Gestures and facial expressions are frequently used by 60% of respondents, and practicing with friends or classmates is a common activity, with 76.7% always doing so. Recording oneself for assessment is sometimes done by 70%, and language apps or websites are widely used by 63.3%. Expressing ideas confidently is more often a sometimes practice (73.3%), and expanding vocabulary through speaking is a priority for 76.7%. Feedback is carefully considered by 60%, and role-plays or simulations are used by 66.7% to practice. Idiomatic expressions are sometimes used appropriately by 56.7%, and engaging with native speakers is a frequent activity for 56.7%. Participation in speaking contests or debates is sometimes done by 70%, and reflecting on performance and setting improvement goals is practiced by 50%. Overall, the data indicates a strong commitment to actively engaging in and improving Tamil/English speaking skills through various methods and strategies.

Table 3
Reading Skills (F=Frequency, %=Percentage)

| No. | Questions | Always=1 | | Sometimes=2 | | Never=3 | |
|-----|--|----------|------|-------------|------|---------|-----|
| | | F | % | F | % | F | % |
| 1 | I read Tamil/English newspapers or magazines regularly. | 6 | 20.0 | 24 | 80.0 | 0 | 0 |
| 2 | I use context clues to understand the meaning of unfamiliar Tamil/English words while reading. | 18 | 60.0 | 11 | 36.7 | 1 | 3.3 |

| | | | | | | | |
|----|---|----|------|----|------|---|-----|
| 3 | I skim through Tamil/English texts to get the main idea quickly. | 8 | 26.7 | 21 | 70.0 | 1 | 3.3 |
| 4 | I make predictions about what will happen next while reading Tamil/English stories or articles. | 19 | 63.3 | 10 | 33.3 | 1 | 3.3 |
| 5 | I visualize scenes or events described in Tamil/English texts to aid comprehension. | 12 | 40.0 | 18 | 60.0 | 0 | 0 |
| 6 | I use dictionaries or online resources to look up unfamiliar Tamil/English words while reading. | 20 | 66.7 | 10 | 33.3 | 0 | 0 |
| 7 | I highlight or underline important information while reading Tamil/English texts. | 8 | 26.7 | 22 | 73.3 | 0 | 0 |
| 8 | I summarize what I've read in Tamil/English texts to check my understanding. | 21 | 70.0 | 8 | 26.7 | 1 | 3.3 |
| 9 | I read Tamil/English books or novels for pleasure. | 9 | 30.0 | 19 | 63.3 | 2 | 6.7 |
| 10 | I annotate Tamil/English texts with notes or comments to deepen my comprehension. | 21 | 70.0 | 7 | 23.3 | 2 | 6.7 |
| 11 | I read Tamil/English academic articles or research papers to enhance my knowledge. | 10 | 33.3 | 20 | 66.7 | 0 | 0 |
| 12 | I reflect on my reading strategies and adjust them based on my understanding. | 21 | 70.0 | 9 | 30.0 | 0 | 0 |

The survey results show that while reading Tamil/English texts, individuals employ a variety of strategies to enhance their comprehension. Regular reading of newspapers or magazines is less common, with only 20% always doing so, but 80% sometimes engage in this activity.

Context clues are frequently used by 60% to understand unfamiliar words, and 63.3% always make predictions about upcoming events in stories or articles. Visualization is a strategy sometimes used by 60%, and dictionaries or online resources are always used by 66.7% for looking up new words. Highlighting or underlining important information is a common practice for 73.3%, and summarizing texts to check understanding is a strategy always employed by 70%. Pleasure reading is sometimes done by 63.3%, and annotating texts with notes or comments is another activity always practiced by 70%. Reading academic articles or research papers is sometimes done by 66.7%, and reflecting on and adjusting reading strategies based on understanding is always practiced by 70%. Overall, the data indicates a strong use of various reading strategies to improve comprehension and knowledge, with a particular emphasis on using context clues, making predictions, and summarizing texts.

Table 4

Writing Skills (F=Frequency, %=Percentage)

| No. | Questions | Always=1 | | Sometimes=2 | | Never=3 | |
|-----|--|----------|------|-------------|------|---------|------|
| | | F | % | F | % | F | % |
| 1 | I write Tamil/English compositions or essays regularly. | 9 | 30.0 | 21 | 70.0 | 0 | 0 |
| 2 | I brainstorm ideas before starting to write Tamil/English compositions. | 18 | 60.0 | 12 | 40.0 | 0 | 0 |
| 3 | I use outlines or drafts to organize my thoughts before writing. | 4 | 13.3 | 24 | 80.0 | 2 | 6.7 |
| 4 | I proofread and edit my Tamil/English writing for grammatical errors and typos. | 20 | 66.7 | 8 | 26.7 | 2 | 6.7 |
| 5 | I seek feedback from teachers or peers on my Tamil/English writing assignments. | 5 | 16.7 | 23 | 76.7 | 2 | 6.7 |
| 6 | I incorporate varied sentence structures and vocabulary in my Tamil/English writing. | 22 | 73.3 | 6 | 20.0 | 2 | 6.7 |
| 7 | I use transitions and cohesive devices to connect ideas in my Tamil/English writing. | 10 | 33.3 | 19 | 63.3 | 1 | 3.3 |
| 8 | I revise and rewrite my Tamil/English compositions to improve clarity and coherence. | 17 | 56.7 | 12 | 40.0 | 1 | 3.3 |
| 9 | I practice writing Tamil/English letters or emails for different purposes. | 12 | 40.0 | 16 | 53.3 | 2 | 6.7 |
| 10 | I set goals for improving my Tamil/English writing skills and track my progress. | 17 | 56.7 | 10 | 33.3 | 3 | 10.0 |

The survey results reveal the practices and habits of individuals when it comes to writing in Tamil/English. Regular composition or essay writing is sometimes done by 70%, while brainstorming ideas before writing is always practiced by 60%. Using outlines or drafts to organize thoughts is a less frequent strategy, with only 13.3% always doing so and 80% sometimes. Proofreading and editing for grammatical errors is a common practice for 66.7%, and seeking feedback from teachers or peers is more often done sometimes (76.7%). Incorporating varied sentence structures and vocabulary is always practiced by 73.3%, and using transitions to connect ideas is sometimes done by 63.3%. Revising and rewriting compositions for clarity is always practiced by 56.7%, while writing letters or emails for different purposes is sometimes done by 53.3%. Setting goals for improving writing skills is always practiced by 56.7%. Overall, the data indicates a strong emphasis on brainstorming, proofreading, varied sentence structures, and goal-setting to enhance writing skills, with less focus on using outlines or drafts and seeking feedback.

Table 5
Vocabulary skills (F=Frequency, %=Percentage)

| No. | Questions | Always=1 | | Sometimes=2 | | Never=3 | |
|-----|---|----------|------|-------------|------|---------|------|
| | | F | % | F | % | F | % |
| 1 | I learn new Tamil/English words through reading. | 1 | 3.3 | 29 | 97.6 | 0 | 0 |
| 2 | I use flashcards or mnemonic devices to memorize Tamil/English vocabulary. | 20 | 66.7 | 10 | 33.3 | 0 | 0 |
| 3 | I keep a vocabulary journal to record new Tamil/English words and their meanings. | 6 | 20.0 | 21 | 70.0 | 3 | 10.0 |
| 4 | I use Tamil/English word games or puzzles to practice vocabulary. | 13 | 43.3 | 12 | 40.0 | 5 | 16.7 |
| 5 | I review and reinforce Tamil/English vocabulary regularly to retain it. | 6 | 20.0 | 19 | 63.3 | 5 | 16.7 |
| 6 | I use synonyms and antonyms to expand my Tamil/English vocabulary. | 18 | 60.0 | 11 | 36.7 | 1 | 3.3 |
| 7 | I participate in Tamil/English vocabulary quizzes or competitions. | 7 | 23.3 | 21 | 70.0 | 2 | 6.7 |

| | | | | | | | |
|----|--|----|-------|----|-------|---|------|
| 8 | I make connections between new Tamil/English words and words in my native language. | 16 | 53.3 | 14 | 46.7 | 0 | 0 |
| 9 | I use Tamil/English vocabulary apps or online resources to learn new words. | 10 | 33.3 | 17 | 56.7 | 3 | 10.0 |
| 10 | I apply newly learned Tamil/English words in sentences to practice usage. | 7 | 23.3 | 21 | 70.0 | 2 | 6.7 |
| 11 | I group related Tamil/English words together to better understand their meanings. | 15 | 50.0 | 15 | 50.0 | 0 | 0 |
| 12 | I practice using Tamil/English words in different contexts to enhance retention. | 5 | 16.7 | 22 | 73.3 | 3 | 10.0 |
| 13 | I analyze word roots and affixes to deduce the meanings of unfamiliar Tamil/English words. | 17 | 56.7 | 13 | 43.3 | 0 | 0 |
| 14 | I review and revisit previously learned Tamil/English vocabulary to reinforce learning. | 10 | 33.3 | 17 | 56.7 | 3 | 10.0 |
| 15 | I create mnemonics or visual aids to remember difficult Tamil/English words. | 15 | 50.00 | 15 | 50.00 | 0 | 0 |
| 16 | I actively seek out opportunities to use new Tamil/English vocabulary in conversation. | 5 | 16.7 | 22 | 73.3 | 3 | 10.0 |

The survey results show a range of methods used by individuals to learn and retain Tamil/English vocabulary. Almost all participants (97.6%) sometimes learn new words through reading. Flashcards and mnemonic devices are a common method, with 66.7% always using

them. Keeping a vocabulary journal is less frequent, with only 20% always doing so. Word games or puzzles are sometimes used by 40%, and regular review and reinforcement are also sometimes practiced by 63.3%. Using synonyms and antonyms is always done by 60%, and vocabulary quizzes or competitions are sometimes participated in by 70%. Making connections between new words and native language words is a frequent strategy, with 53.3% always doing so. Vocabulary apps or online resources are sometimes used by 56.7%, and applying new words in sentences is sometimes done by 70%. Grouping related words together is equally practiced always and sometimes by 50% each. Practicing words in different contexts is sometimes done by 73.3%, and analyzing word roots and affixes is always done by 56.7%. Reviewing previously learned vocabulary is sometimes done by 56.7%, and creating mnemonics or visual aids is practiced equally by 50%. Actively seeking opportunities to use new vocabulary in conversation is sometimes done by 73.3%. Overall, the data indicates a strong use of diverse strategies for vocabulary acquisition, with particular emphasis on flashcards, synonyms and antonyms, and contextual practice.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this research has provided valuable insights into the demographic characteristics, language learning strategies, and correlations among ESL lower secondary learners from Tamil school background. The analysis of language learning strategies usage and resource access underscored disparities that require attention to ensure equitable opportunities for all learners. Efforts to promote digital literacy skills and provide access to technological resources can empower learners to enhance their language proficiency effectively. Overall, the findings of this study have significant implications for language education policy and practice. By contextualizing the findings within existing literature and educational practices, this research contributes to a deeper understanding of language learning strategies and outcomes among ESL learners. Moreover, the insights gleaned from this study can inform the development of inclusive approaches that address the diverse needs and circumstances of ESL learners from Tamil school background. By promoting equitable access to language learning resources and support, educators and policymakers can create environments that foster optimal language learning outcomes for all learners.

Based on the findings and conclusions drawn from this research, several recommendations are proposed to guide educators, policymakers, and researchers in enhancing language education for ESL lower secondary learners from Tamil school background. First is to develop and implement tailored language learning interventions that address the specific needs and developmental stages of early adolescent learners. These interventions should incorporate interactive and engaging activities to promote language acquisition and proficiency effectively (Charun, 2012). Besides, implement gender-responsive teaching methodologies that cater to the diverse learning styles and preferences of male and female learners. Provide equitable access to language learning resources and support to ensure that all learners have equal opportunities to succeed.

Next, promote digital literacy skills among ESL learners to empower them to leverage language learning strategies for language learning outside of school. Provide access to technological resources and online language learning platforms to enhance language proficiency and digital competence (Vimalakshan, 2021). Lastly, address resource disparities by providing equitable access to language learning resources, including textbooks, multimedia materials, and digital

devices. Implement policies and initiatives to bridge the digital divide and ensure that all learners have access to the tools necessary for effective language learning (Chiew & Ismail, 2021).

By implementing these recommendations, stakeholders can work together to create inclusive language education environments that support the diverse needs and circumstances of ESL lower secondary learners from Tamil school background. Through collaborative efforts and targeted interventions, researchers can empower learners to achieve their full potential and succeed in their language learning journey.

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