CHAPTER-VI

THE PROBLEMS OF TEACHING PĀLI
AT THE GRAMMATICAL LEVEL
CHAPTER-VI
THE PROBLEMS OF TEACHING PĀLI
AT THE GRAMMATICAL LEVEL

6.0 Introduction

This chapter deals with the problems of teaching Pāli at the grammatical level. It analyzes the errors committed by the learners in learning the grammatical aspects of Pāli at the upper secondary level. Focus of this chapter is limited to a few grammatical structures only.

For the purpose of the analysis of errors questionnaire No.2 (see appendix No. 3) is administered on twenty schools. The total number of students for administering the questionnaire is 200. The questionnaire has four sections. Accordingly the present chapter has been divided into four sections. The first section consists of the test item like ‘fill in the blanks with correct choice’. The blanks are to be filled in by correct case forms. The second section is concerned with the correct arrangement of words in Pāli sentences. The third section is concerned with the writing of short simple Pāli sentences correctly. The fourth section is related to the ability of the learners in translating Pāli sentences into Thai. All the test items aim at finding out the errors of the learners at the grammatical level.
6.1 Analysis of the Errors in the Test Item like Fill in the Blanks with correct choices (case forms)

The total number of test items is 1,000 (5×200). The total number of correct responses given by the students is 116 and the total number of incorrect responses given by the student is 834.

The summary of the number of students (along with the percentage) who have given the correct and incorrect answers has been shown in the following table.

Table No. 18
The correct and incorrect choices in ‘fill in the blanks’
(with case forms)

To make the sentences complete by selecting a correct answer (answers are given in the questionnaire No.2 at the end of the section 1) to fill in the blank is a very difficult task for the students. Naturally, the students of different schools under survey have not shown a good performance in this regard. Their performance is presented below in the table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Qs. Nos.</th>
<th>Correct</th>
<th>Incorrect</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No. of Students</td>
<td>Percentage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>5.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>5.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>166</td>
<td>16.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Here, the percentage at the table shows that the performance of the learners at the upper secondary level in case of making the sentences complete by selecting a correct answer to fill in the blanks is very low because 83.4% responses have been incorrectly given by the students and 16.6% responses have been correctly given.

6.2 Analysis of the Errors Committed by the Learners in Arranging the Words in Pāli Sentences

The total number of test items is 1,000. The total number of correct answers given by the learners is 490 and the total number of incorrect answers given by the learners is 510.

To arrange words correctly in Pāli sentences is difficult for the learners at the upper secondary level. They often commit mistakes in this regard.

It is found that the learners at the upper secondary level are very poor in arranging the words with the percentage 87.4% of inaccuracy. There is only 12.6% of accuracy of performance in this regard.

The total number of students who have given the correct and incorrect answers is presented in the following table.
### Table No. 19
The correct and incorrect arrangement of the order of words in Pali Sentences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Qs. Nos.</th>
<th>Correct</th>
<th>Incorrect</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No. of Students</td>
<td>Percentage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>16.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>8.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>12.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Now item-wise incorrect answers are presented below:

**Sentence No. 1**— correct answers given by 16.5% of the total number of learners and incorrect answers given by 83.5% of learners

*Pasādo gunānaṃ paccayo hoti.* (Correct sentence)

'Faith is the part of goodness.'

Some specimens of incorrect answer in case of S.1:

1. Hoti pasādo gunānaṃ paccayo.

   It is an incorrect answer because of putting the verb form /hoti/ before the subject /pasādo/ in the sentence.¹

2. Guṇānaṃ paccayo pasādo hoti.
It is an incorrect answer because of putting the subject /pasádo/ after the object /paccayo/ in the sentence.

3. Pasádo paccayo guṇānam hoti.

It is an incorrect answer because of putting the object /paccayo/ before the adjective /guṇānam/ in the sentence.

4. Paccayo pasádo guṇānam hoti.

It is an incorrect answer because of putting the object /paccayo/ before the subject /pasádo/ in the sentence.

Sentence No. 2— correct answers given by 8.5% of the total number of learners and incorrect answers given by 91.5% of learners

Jāti dukkhā hoti. (Correct sentence)

‘Birth brings sufferings.’

Specimens of incorrect answer in case of S.2:

1. Hoti dukkhā jāti.

It is an incorrect answer because of putting the verb /hoti/ before the subject /jāti/ in the sentence.

2. Dukkhā jāti hoti.

It is an incorrect answer because of putting the object /dukkhā/ before the subject /jāti/ in the sentence.

Sentence No. 3— correct answers given by 11% of the total number of learners and incorrect answers given by 89% of learners
Sayanāṃ dukkhaṁ hotī. (Correct answer)

‘Sleeping brings sufferings.’

Specimens of incorrect answer in case of S.3:

1. Hoti dukkhaṁ sayanāṃ.
   It is an incorrect answer because of putting the verb /hoti/ before the subject /sayanāṃ/ and putting the object /dukkhaṁ/ before the subject /sayanāṃ/ in the sentence.

2. Sayanāṃ hoti dukkhaṁ.
   It is an incorrect answer because of putting the verb /hoti/ before the object /dukkhaṁ/ and after the subject /sayanāṃ/ in the sentence.

3. Dukkhaṁ sayanāṃ hoti.
   It is an incorrect answer because of putting the object /dukkhaṁ/ before the subject /sayanāṃ/ in the sentence.

Sentence No. 4—correct answers given by 18% of the total number of learners and incorrect answers given by 82% of learners

Jano paññaṁ pasannah karoti. (Correct answer)

‘Man improves the knowledge quickly.’

Specimens of incorrect answer in case of S.4:

1. Karoti jano paññaṁ pasannah.
It is an incorrect answer because of putting the verb /karoti/ before the subject /jano/ in the sentence.

2. Paññāṁ jano pasannam karoti.

It is an incorrect answer because of putting the object /paññāṁ/ before the subject /jano/ in the sentence.


It is an incorrect answer because of putting the adjective /pasannam/ after the verb /karoti/ in the sentence.

4. Pasannam jano paññāṁ karoti.

It is an incorrect answer because of putting the adjective /pasannam/ before the subject /jano/ in the sentence.

Sentence No. 5—correct answers given by 9% of the total number of learners and incorrect answers given by 91% of learners

Puriso puññam sannicitam karoti. (Correct answer)

‘Man makes good works to be good.’

Specimens of incorrect answer in case of S.5:

1. Karoti puriso puññam sannicitam.

It is an incorrect answer because of putting the verb /karoti/ before the subject /puriso/ in the sentence.

2. Puriso puññam karoti sannicitam.
It is an incorrect answer because of putting the adjective /sannicitam/ after the verb /karoti/ in the sentence.

3. Puṇṇam puriso sannicitam karoti.

It is an incorrect answer because of putting the object /puṇṇam/ before the subject /puriso/ in the sentence.

4. Puriso sannicitam puṇṇam karoti.

It is an incorrect answer because of putting the adjective /sannicitam/ after the subject /puriso/ in the sentence.

5. Sannicitam puriso puṇṇam karoti.

It is an incorrect answer because of putting the adjective /sannicitam/ before the subject /puriso/ in the sentence.

6. Puriso karoti sannicitam puṇṇam.

It is an incorrect answer because of putting the verb /karoti/ after the subject /puriso/ in the sentence.

6.3 Analysis of the Errors Committed by the Learners in Writing Pāli Sentences

This section deals with the analysis of the errors committed by the learners in writing Pāli sentences. It aims at analyzing the learners’ proficiency in writing Pāli sentences. The learners are asked to write ten sentences in Pāli.

The total number of sentences is then 2,000 (10 × 200). The answer-sheets are examined and it is found that the total number of
correct answers given by the learners is 256 and the total number of incorrect answers given by the learners is 1744.

The summary of the number of students who have given the correct and incorrect answers has been shown in the following table.

Table No. 20

The correct and incorrect writing of Pāli sentences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Answer</th>
<th>Correct</th>
<th>Incorrect</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No. of Students</td>
<td>Percentage</td>
<td>No. of Students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>188</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>166</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>178</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>168</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>172</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>11.5</td>
<td>177</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>174</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>15.5</td>
<td>169</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>11.5</td>
<td>177</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>175</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>256</td>
<td>12.8</td>
<td>1744</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Here, the table shows that the learners of the upper secondary level have shown poor performance in writing Pāli sentences because 12.8% sentences have been correctly written by the learners and 87.2% sentences have been written incorrectly.
Now the types of errors committed by the learners in writing ten free sentences in Pāli are discussed below:

1. It is often found that the sentence is not complete. In some cases the verb is absent; in some cases the adjective is missing. For example:

   Incorrect sentence: /geham jānānāṃ vasanaṃ/ (Verb absent)

   (Correct sentence: /geham jānānāṃ vasanaṃ hoti/ ‘A house is a living-place for the people’)

   Incorrect sentence: /nagaraṃ hoti/ (Adjective absent)

   (Correct sentence: /nagaraṃ visālāṃ hoti/ ‘A town is wide’)

2. As Warder (1984: 8) points out in Pāli the subject and the verb agree in number. But there is no subject verb agreement as found in the following sentences:

   Incorrect sentence: /hatthā kammakā hoti/

   (Correct sentence: /hatthā kammakā honti/ ‘Hands form a part of body to help in working’)

   Incorrect sentence: /saddhā pasannā hoti/

   (Correct sentence: /saddhā pasannā hoti/ ‘Faith is bright’)

3. The case form of the object is not correct. For example:

   Incorrect sentence: /kuti bhikhūnāṃ vasanaṃ hoti/

   (Correct sentence: /kuti bhikhūnāṃ vasanā hoti/ ‘A hut is the living-place of the monks’)

Incorrect sentence: /rājā pūrisā kisaṁ karoti/

(Correct sentence: /rājā pūrisam kisaṁ karoti/ ‘A man is done to be thin by a king ’)

4. The conjugational form of the verb is not correct. For example:

Incorrect sentence: /puriso rukkhaṁ chindanti/

(Correct sentence: /puriso rukkhaṁ chindati/ ‘The man cuts a tree’)

Incorrect sentence: /aham odanam paccāma/

(Correct sentence: /aham odanam paccāmi/ ‘I cook rice’)

5. The declined form of the adjective is wrong. For example:

Incorrect sentence: /sayanam dukkho hoti/

(Correct sentence: /sayanam dukkhaṁ hoti/ ‘Sleeping brings suffering’)

Incorrect sentence: /papphato mahantasmiṁ hoti/

(Correct sentence: /papphato mahanto hoti/ ‘A mountain is big’)

6. There is no verb in the sentence when it is not a verbless sentence. For example:

Incorrect sentence: /naro appamatto/
(Correct sentence: /naro appamatto hoti/ ‘The man is not a careless person’)

Incorrect sentence: /pāsādo ucco/

(Correct sentence: /pāsādo ucco hoti/ ‘A castle is high’)

7. In some cases the sentence is written without a subject. For example:

Incorrect sentence: /mato hoti/

(Correct sentence: /goṇo mato hoti/ ‘A cow dies’)

Incorrect sentence: /visāradaṁ hoti/

(Correct sentence: /ñāṇam visāradaṁ hoti/ ‘Wisdom brings confidence’)

8. In some cases there is no object in the sentence when the existence of an object is required. For example:

Incorrect sentence: /manusso vasanaṁ karoti/

(Correct sentence: /manusso agāraṁ vasanaṁ karoti/ ‘A man builds a house to live’)

Incorrect sentence: /paṇḍitto subhavitam karoti/

(Correct sentence: /paṇḍitto paññāṁ subhavitam karoti/ ‘A sage improves wisdom excellently’)

9. Sometimes the learners use lexical items in wrong contexts without knowing the meaning. For example:
Incorrect sentence: /gharaṃ suriyaṃ passanti/ ‘House sees the sun’

(Correct sentence: /nara suriyaṃ passanti/ ‘People see the sun’)

Incorrect sentence: /turaga dhammaṃ hoti/ ‘A horse is Dhamma’

(Correct sentence: /buddho dhammaṃ bhāsatī/ ‘The Buddha teaches Dhamma’)

6.4 Analysis of the Errors Committed by the Learners in Translating Pāli Sentences into Thai

This section deals with the analysis of the errors committed by the learners in translating the sentences of the Pāli language into the Thai language. It aims at analyzing the learners’ proficiency of translating Pāli sentences into Thai. There are ten sentences or test items in this section.

The total number of test items is 2,000 (10 ×200). The total number of the correct answers given by the learners is 264 and the total number of the incorrect answers given by the learners is 1736.

The summary of the number of learners who have given the correct and incorrect answers has been shown in the following table.
Table No. 21
The correct and incorrect translation of given Pāli sentences into Thai

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Qs. Nos.</th>
<th>Correct</th>
<th>Incorrect</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No. of Students</td>
<td>Percentage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>7.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>8.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>8.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>21.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>24.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>16.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>264</td>
<td>13.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above table shows that the performance in translating the given Pāli sentences into Thai by the learners at the upper secondary level is not so good because 13.2% sentences have been correctly translated by the learners at the upper secondary level. The percentage in case of incorrect answer is 86.8%.

Now the item-wise incorrect translations of Pāli sentences in Thai are given below:

**Sentence No. 1**— correct answer given by 5% of the total number of learners and incorrect answer given by 95% of learners.
P. /sūdə odanaː  pəcanto/  
Correct translation: Th. / phókhua hûŋːæ:w sîŋkhôː wsuː:k/  
a cook cooked to rice  
‘A cook cooked rice’

Some specimens of incorrect answer in case of S.1:

a. Th. /phókhua cãːɦûŋ sîŋkhôː wsuː:k/  
a cook will cook to rice

b. Th. /phókhua yômhuŋ khôː wsuː:k/  
a cook plan to cook rice

c. Th. /khôː wsuː:k phókhua hûŋyûː/  
rice a cook is cooking

Sentence No. 2— correct answer given by 4% of the total number of learners and incorrect answer given by 96% of learners

P. /sûdənə odo pəcənîyə/  
Correct translation: Th. /khôː wsuː:k tənphókhua phîŋhûŋ/  
rice by a cook should cook  
‘Rice should be cooked by a cook’

Some specimens of incorrect answer in case of S.2:
a. Th. /khː:wsu:k/ phókhua hûgyû:/
    rice a cook is cooking

b. Th. /phókhua/ hûgyû: sîŋkdːwsu:k/
    a cook is cooking to rice

c. Th. /khː:wsu:k/ ?anphókhua că:hûŋ/
    rice by a cook will cook

Sentence No. 3— correct answer given by 7.5% of the total number of learners and incorrect answer given by 92.5% of learners

P. /sâmiko stūdam odanaṃ pacento/

Correct translation: Th. /ná:y yanphókhua hûyhûŋyu: sîŋkdːwsu:k/

    master to a cook give cooking to rice

    ‘The master orders the cook to cook rice’

Some specimens of incorrect answer in case of S.3:

a. Th. /ná:y bokphókhua hûyhûŋ sîŋkdːwsu:k/
    master tell a cook give to cook to rice

b. Th. /ná:y yanphókhua hûŋ sîŋkdːwsu:k/
    master to a cook cook to rice
c. Th. /ná:y háyphókhua hûñlæ:w sîŋkhô:wsu:k/

master give a cook cooked to rice

**Sentence No. 4**—correct answer given by 8.5% of the total number of learners and incorrect answer given by 91.5% of learners

P. /sâmikena südam odano pâcanīyo/

Correct translation: Th. /khô:wsu:k ?anná:y yaŋphókhua phûñhûñhûñ/

rice by master to a cook should cook

‘The boss made the cook to cook rice.’

Some specimens of incorrect answer in case of S.4:

a. Th. /khô:wsu:k ?anná:y yaŋphókhua hûñyû:/

rice by master to a cook is cooking

b. Th. /khô:wsu:k ná:y háyphókhua hûñlæ:w/

rice master give a cook cooked

c. Th. /khô:wsu:k ?anná:y háyphókhua hûñyû:/

rice by master give a cook is cooking

**Sentence No. 5**—correct answer given by 8.5% of the total number of learners and incorrect answer given by 91.5% of learners

P. /tena bhavítabbhām/
Correct translation: Th. /?ankhāw phāŋben/

by him should be

'He should remain'

Some specimens of incorrect answer in case of S.5:

a. Th. /khāw  benyu:/

he be

b. Th. /?ankhāw  yəmben/

by him plan to be

c. Th. /khāw  phāŋbenleː:w/

he should be

Sentence No. 6— correct answer given by 21.5% of the total number of learners and incorrect answer given by 78.5% of learners

P. /yathā me dhanacchedo na hoti,tathā karissāmi/

Correct translation: Th. /khwāː mkhaːtbaiy  hāŋsaː b  khāŋruːw

leaving of property my

cēː  māy  miː  dūyaŋkā:sndāiy

will no have as
we must do so
'I will do everything to protect my property’

Some specimens of incorrect answer in case of S.6:

a. Th. /khwā:mkha:t Ḥansā: khōgrā:w cā mi: leavings of property my will have
dōybrākā:ndāiy rā:w cā:k krātham dōybrākā:nnān/ as we will do so

b. Th. /khwā:mkha:bnbāiy Ḥansā: khōgrā:w cā: mi: leavings of property my will no mi:
rā:w cā:k krātham/ have we will do

c. Th./sā:b khōgrā:w cā: māiy mi: rā:w cā: krātham/ property my will no have we will do

Sentence No. 7— correct answer given by 24.5% of the total number of learners and incorrect answer given by 75.5% of learners

P. /ūpāsikā buddhagatāya saddhāya dhammarāṇ suṇāṭi/

A female devotee has faith in the Buddha to listen to the Dhamma

Some specimens of incorrect answer in case of S.7:

a. Th. ubāsika: mi: satttha: kā: b
   female devotee have faith with
   phṛṭphūṭhācā: w fāŋ sīṭṭhām/
   Buddha listen to Dhamma

b. Th. ubāsika: satttha: nāy phṛṭphūṭhācā: w
   female devotee faith in Buddha
   fāŋ thām/
   listen Dhamma

c. Th. ubāsika: mi: satttha: yomfāŋ thām/
   female devotee have faith plan to listen Dhamma

Sentence No. 8— correct answer given by 16.5% of the total number of learners and incorrect answer given by 83.5% of learners

P. /buddho vo ekassa dhammarī deseti/
Correct translation: Th. /prəphʊθəcə:w yəmsə:daɛːja θīṭhām

Buddha plan to teach to Dhamma

kæ:bukkhənphû:niŋ/
to you to the other

‘The Buddha teaches Dhamma to you and the other’

Some specimens of incorrect answer in case of S.8:

a. Th. /prəphʊθəcə:w saːdaɛːja θām kæːθə:n/

Buddha teach Dhamma to you

b. Th. /prəphʊθəcə:w saːdəɲyuː θīṭhām thə:n bukkhənŋəŋ/

Buddha is teaching to Dhamma you one another

c. Th. /prəphʊθəcə:w yəmsə:daɛːja θīṭhām/

Buddha plan to teach to Dhamma

Sentence No. 9— correct answer given by 20% of the total number of learners and incorrect answer given by 80% of learners

P. /sāmaŋəro tesu ekəm dhammarā desento/

Correct translation: Th. /saːmmanen saːdaɛːɲyuː nəy θนามθ̥ŋɭə:yəŋəŋ:

novice is teaching in Dhamma
A novice teaches one lesson (Dhamma) much religiously.

Some specimens of incorrect answer in case of S.9:

a. Th. /sa:mmanen sa:daê:ŋ thûm śrîthambôtnīy/
   novice teach Dhamma to one lesson

   novice is teaching much Dhamma

   novice will be teaching to one Dhamma

Sentence No. 10—correct answer given by 16% of the total number of learners and incorrect answer given by 84% of learners

P. /āgamehi tāva sāmi, yāva ayarān vayappatto hoti/

Correct translation: Th. /nā:y thû:n caŋro: butnī:
   master you must wait this son

penphû:thûnlû:wsînyâdû yêmpen phianûn/
to be grow up be till
‘Master, please wait till this (son) is grown up’

Some specimens of incorrect answer in case of S.10:

a. Th. /no:y thə:n coŋro: butnî: thŋlaːːwsŋwɔːy/
   master you must wait this son grew up

b. Th. /no:y coŋro: butnî: peŋphûːthŋlaːːwsŋwɔːy yônpen/
   master must wait this son be growing up be

c. Th. /thə:n Ʌːː butnî: thŋlaːːwsŋwɔːy/
   you wait this son grew up

Now some comments on the errors committed by the learners in translating the Pāli sentences into Thai are presented below:

It is observed that in most cases the learners cannot understand the meaning of the Pāli sentence and that is why they cannot translate it correctly. Sometimes they use the incorrect verb form though they understand the meaning of the verb. Sometimes one or two vocabulary items are unknown to them. So they translate these words incorrectly. Sometimes they can translate partly that means they leave some vocabulary items un-translated.
Notes

1. Though Pāli is an inflectional language as Warder (pp. 9) points out usually the subject stands first in Pāli.

References