CHAPTER 3

3.0 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

There are various means that we can employ to collect SLA
data. The most common ways are Contrastive Analysis
(CA), Error Analysis (EA), Performance Analysis and
Discourse Analysis. For this study, only CA and EA will
be dealt with, as this study investigates the phenomena
of errors by SL learners using the EA framework.

3.1 Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis (CAH)

The period from the 1940s to the 1960s was the prime
period when CA studies were conducted by researchers.
These researchers tried to identify points of similarity
and differences between NLs and TLs. They ascribed
errors in the learning of a SL to interference from the
habits of the first language (L1). The underlying belief
was that a more effective pedagogy would result when
these were considered. Several linguists in the field of
TL pedagogy like Henry Sweet and Otto Jespersen used the
term "the pull of the MT" in learning a TL but Fries
(1945) and Lado (1957) were the main exponents of this
hypothesis. Fries wrote:

"The most effective materials are those that are based upon a scientific description of the language to be learned, carefully composed with a parallel description of the native language of the learner."

(1945: 9)

Lado (1957) and Weinreich (1953) and Carl James (1987) further asserted that where two languages were similar, positive transfer would occur and where they were different, negative transfer or interference would result. In other words, the learning of a task is facilitated or impeded by the previous learning of a task depending on the similarities or differences between the . MT and the TL. Lado wrote:

"... in the comparison between native and foreign language lies the key to ease or difficulty in foreign language learning".

(1957: 1)

Moreover, the CAH sees language transfer and interference as habit formation or behavioural. This assumption rested primarily on the belief that language learning is derived from behaviourist psychology. Wardhaugh (1970) claimed that the CAH exists in two versions - the strong version and the weak version. The CAH in its strong version, claimed that it could predict most of the errors a learner will make while the weaker version, claimed

that it could diagnose errors that have been committed. To this effect, Fisiak pointed out that:

> "... the value and importance of contrastive studies lies in the ability to indicate potential areas of interference and errors ... contrastive studies predict errors, error analysis verifies contrastive predictions."
>
> (1981: 7)

3.1.1 The Weaknesses of the CAH

Ironically, the association of CAH with behaviourism led to its downfall. Chomsky (1959) challenged this behaviourist view of LA. Moreover, when predictions arising from CA were subjected to empirical tests, serious flaws were discovered. True, CA predicted some errors (Duskova: 1968, Arabski: 1979), but it obviously did not anticipate all (Hyltenstam: 1977). Moreover, it overpredicted (Dulay and Burt: 1974) as some errors it predicted did not materialize.

Long and Sato (1984) pointed out that the most fatal flaw of the CAH was the assumption that analysis of SL data could be based upon a linguistic product to yield meaningful insight into a psycholinguistic process. Furthermore, there is empirical evidence to show that although interference from a student's NL is the major

source of phonological errors, interference errors are only one of the many types of errors found in the students' utterances or works in the TL (Wolfe: 1967, Wilkins: 1968; Duskova: 1969, Selinker: 1969, Ervin-Tripp: 1970, Stenson: 1974, Lo Coco: 1974, Hendrickson: 1977, Rogers: 1984).

Wardhaugh (1970) contended that most of the contrasts were made based on practical knowledge of two languages rather than on any systematic application of a theory of CA. Most of the valid CA evidence seems to be phonological and Richards (in Dulay and Burt, 1972) states that CA may be most predictive at the level of phonology and least predictive at the syntactic level.

Corder has firmly stated that the IL of the learner may, in his own words:

> "... exhibit systematic properties which show no obvious resemblance to the MT or any other language known to the learner."
>
> (1981: 72)

He goes on to say that these errors may be attributed to false inferences about the TL, or as a result of the way the TL data has been presented to him or from mutual interference of items within the language.

Despite this criticism, the CAH has played a prominent role in SLL. George (1972) has estimated that approximately one third of all errors made by SL learners can be attributed to MT inteference. Schachter (1974) and James (1987) views CAH and EA as complementary to each other as each approach has its vital role in SLA.

3.2 Error Analysis (EA)

The EA framework sees the making of errors as inevitable. Within such a framework, the error is perceived as a rule violation with respect to the TL alone. By studying errors, a teacher obtains data on the nature and significance of the obstacles that lie in the path of the learner in his discovery of the TL rules. By classifying the errors a learner makes, Corder (1981) claims that teachers and researchers can learn a great deal about the SLA process. He believes that errors are significant in three ways:

> (i) To the teacher, they indicate through systematic analysis, how far the learner has progressed and what remains for him to learn.

(ii) To the **researcher**, they provide evidence
of how the TL is learnt and the type of
strategies that SL learners adopt.

(iii) To the **learner**, errors are devices a
learner uses in order to learn. It is a
way the learner has of testing his
hypotheses about the nature of the
language he is learning.

Thus, the EA framework tries to account for transfer and
interference in terms of cognitive learning as it
utilizes the systematicity of errors, i.e., the errors of
competence. In Corder's own words:

> "The errors of performance will
> characteristically be unsystematic and the
> errors of competence, systematic. It will be
> useful hereafter to refer to errors of
> performance as **mistakes**, reserving the term
> **error** to refer to the systematic errors of
> the learner ... A learner's errors, then,
> provide evidence of the system of the
> language he is using (i.e., he has learned)
> at a particular point (and it must be
> repeated that he is using some system,
> although it is not the right system) ...."
>
> (1967: 168)

This approach clearly assumes that the learners' errors are systematic and not at random, otherwise there would be nothing for the teacher to glean/learn from them. Hence, the practical function of EA is basically the role it plays in the **specification and planning of remedial teaching and remedial curricula** since it provides significant insights into how languages are learnt and provides feedback to the teacher on the effectiveness of his/her teaching materials and strategies. It is a useful device both at the beginning and during the various stages of the language teaching programme.

Basically, from the EA perspective, the learner is no longer conceived as a passive recipient of TL input, viz., where the learner's errors are perceived as the result of interference from L1 habits over which he has no control. Instead, the learner is seen as playing an active role in processing input cognitively - generating hypotheses, testing them and refining them, ultimately determining the TL he will attain. In other words, EA aims at telling us something about the psycholinguistic processes of language learning. As Corder (1981: 35) puts it, EA is part of the methodology of the psycholinguistic investigation of language learning.

Ghadessy (1976) has made a most significant statement in his pilot study of freshmen students at an Iranian University. He has mentioned the limitations of EA for culturally and linguistically different learners. He recommends that EA is most appropriate for those students who have the same background and have already acquired a limited competency in one or several skills of the FL/SL, Hammarberg (1974) and Schachter (1974) have also highlighted the inadequacy of EA. Hammarberg says:

> "... given ... the fact that in practice even the decision whether an item is an 'error' or not, may be dependent on analysis. Useful clues for the teacher, provided by significant non errors, are systematically discarded in EA."
> (1974: 185)

However, EA is more comprehensive than CA as it is not confined to interlingual errors but encompasses all kinds of lingustic errors in SLL. Ervin-tripp (1969), Richards (1971), George (1972) and Dulay and Burt (1974) assert that EA studies are essential in facilitating the teaching and learning of a SL.

3.3 Source and Types of Errors

Corder (1967) made a distinction between a mistake and an error. A mistake is a random performance slip caused by memory lapses, physical states such as fatigue and psychological conditions as in overexcitement. Mistakes are errors of performance and mistakes can therefore be readily self-corrected. They are of no significance to the process of language learning. An error on the other hand, is a systematic deviation characteristic of the learner's linguistic system at a given stage of L2. It is difficult for a learner to correct an error because it is a product reflective of his current stage of underlying competence or as Corder puts it, "transitional competence".

3.3.1 Interlingual Errors

These errors are also known as interference errors as they can be traced to interference from L1 (Richards: 1971). These errors reflect the structure of the learners' MT/NL.

3.3.2 Intralingual Errors And Development Errors

These are errors committed by SL learners regardless of
their L1.   These errors are the result of lack of
competence in the intricacies of the language or a weak
understanding of the rules of the language. They reflect
the learner's competence at a particular stage and
illustrate some of the characteristics of LA.

These errors can also be attributed to generalization
based on partial exposure to the TL.   Richards (1971)
found systematic intralingual errors to involve over-
generalisations, ignorance of rule restrictions,
incomplete application of rules, false hypotheses and
semantic errors.

3.3.3 Global and Local Errors

Burt and Kiparsky (1972) classify a SL learner's errors
into two categories: those errors that cause a listener
or reader to misunderstand a message (global error) and
those errors that do not significantly hinder
communication of a sentence's message (local error).
Burt (1975) claims that the correction of one global
error in a sentence clarifies the intended message more
than the correction of several local errors in the same

sentence.

Hendrickson (1977) modified Burt and Kiparsky's error distinction. He redefined global errors as communicative errors which cause a proficient speaker of a FL either to misconstrue a spoken or written message or to regard the message as obscure within the context of the error. A local error, on the other hand, is a linguistic error that renders a sentence awkward, but does not distort or mar the intended meaning of a sentence, within its contextual framework.

3.3.4 IL Errors

Basically IL is the language system of a learner, that is,

> "... reduced or simplified when compared with standard institutionalized language".
>
> (Corder, 1981: 76)

Fossilization is a major issue in IL. It is a process whereby users of a particular native language tend to keep errors of linguistic items and rules in their IL no matter what age the learner is or the amount of explanation or instruction the learner receives in the

TL. Thus, fossilization occurs when the learner's IL ceases to develop because as Corder writes, the learner continues to upgrade or elaborate his understanding of the TL only until he has a motive. Selinker (1972) contends that the fossilizable linguistic items **reappear** in IL performance, when the learner's attention is focussed upon subject matter that is intellectually new and difficult or when he is in a state of extreme anxiety, excitement or relaxation. He further contends that the fossilization of linguistic items, rules and subsystems can occur as a result of **5 central processes**. They are:

    (i)   **language transfer** - errors that occur as a result of the NL interference.

    (ii)   **transfer of training** - errors that result because of training or teaching procedures.

    (iii)   **Strategies of SL learning** - errors that occur as a result of the approach used by the learner to the material to be learned. A simplification of the TL is attempted by the learner.

(iv) **Strategies of SL communication** - errors that result from the approach used by the learner to communicate with native speakers of the TL. The learner may avoid the finer elements of the TL as he finds it unnecessary in his interaction with the native speakers.

and (v) **Organisation of linguistic materials** - errors that result due to over-generalisation of TL rules.

It is a combination of these five processes that produce fossilized IL competences.

3.3.5 Other Types of Errors

Error taxonomies developed as a result of the researchers' claims that SL learners adopt strategies during the SLA process (Corder, 1967; Richards, 1971; Dulay, Burt and Krashen, 1982). George (1972) classified errors as **simplification or redundancy reduction**. Stenson (1974) defined **induced errors** as errors brought about by a teacher's presentation of two linguistic items in a confusing manner. She claims that these errors result more from the classroom situation than from either the

students' incomplete competence in English grammar or first language interference. Dulay, Burt and Krashen (1982) classify certain errors as **ambiguous errors** because they can equally well be developmental or interlingual errors. These errors reflect the learner's NL structure and at the same time, they are of the type found in the speech of children acquiring a first language. They also define other errors that do not fit into any category as **grab bag errors** since they are not similar to those children make during first language development, they must be unique to SL learners and they are not interlingual.

3.4 Review of Literature

3.4.1 EA Studies In General

Numerous studies on EA have been conducted. Corder (1967) can be considered the pioneer of EA, when he investigated the significance of learners' errors and their idiosyncratic dialects. He proposed the hypothesis that errors are evidence of the learners' strategies. Jain (1969) too, used the EA framework to analyse an Indian English corpus. Duskova (1969) also traced the source of errors in writing (grammar and lexis) made by Czech postgraduate students studying English. Her

findings suggest that students' errors are traceable not only to MT patterns (interlingual errors) but also to confusion between forms and functions of the TL (intralingual errors). She concluded that CA might profitably be supplemented by EA in the preparation of teaching materials.

Another linguist, Buteau (1970), investigated students' errors in the learning of French as a SL at intermediate level. Her findings provided evidence that error-based analyses are productive and from the point of view of lingustics, difficulty is a function of the number of possible alternatives involved and from the point of view of the learner, difficulty is a function of the awareness of contextual cues. This gives further evidence of other factors apart from MT influence in the degree of difficulty in SLA.

A study with 149 native speakers of English from four schools in Toronto was carried out by Tran-Thi-Chau (1971). These students were in their second year of Spanish. The study revealed that 51 per cent of the 1,314 errors analyzed, showed interlingual interference. Interlingual errors formed the second largest group of errors, amounting to 27 per cent. The interlingual

were absent in the students' NL or TL. The intralingual errors were manifested at the morphological level.

Politzer and Ramirez (1973) investigated the errors produced in the spoken English of Mexican-American students in a bilingual and a monolingual school. The sample informants were asked to relate the story of a silent movie they had just watched prior to being interviewed. The answers were recorded on tape and transcribed. The errors were counted and categorised. The analysis showed interlingual and intralingual interference. The study also revealed that the children in the bilingual school did not produce significantly different errors compared to those from the monolingual school.

Another study was carried out by Stenson (1974), who gathered data on errors by observing adult English classes in Tunisia. Her research in Tunisia confirmed that CA is inadequate to explain the source of certain types of errors. She states that there are too many variables involved to explain away errors in terms of interference or TL internal rules, or even a combination of the two. She concentrated on induced errors in her research.

Bhatia (1974) studied the errors in compositions produced by undergraduate students learning ESL whose MT was Hindi. Errors were classified in terms of mechanics and organisation. The findings revealed that the students were making more errors in the area of mechanics (i.e., grammar). Bhatia suggests that EA produces reliable findings upon which remedial materials can be constructed.

In the same year, Dulay and Burt (1974) investigated the proportion of interlingual and developmental errors among three groups of Spanish - speaking children who were learning English in different parts of the United States. 179 children aged 5 - 8 were included in the sample. The corpus for study was the children's speech. 87.1 % of the errors on analysis, proved to be developmental errors. Only 4.7 % of the errors were interlingual, reflecting the structure of Spanish.

A year later, another linguist, Lo Coco (1975), made two investigations of adult SLA in a FL environment, using the EA framework. She examined the errors of native English-speaking students enrolled in Spanish and German classes at a university in Northern California. Her corpus consisted of compositions written by the students. Her findings revealed that 68.7 % of the errors were

developmental errors. Interlingual errors comprised only 15.4 % of the total errors.

Such findings were further reinforced by White (1977) who did a study on 12 Spanish speaking adults from Venezuela who were studying intensive English at a university in Montreal. The language data elicited for study was oral production. 60.3 % of the errors were developmental. 20.6 % of the errors were classified as Interlingual.

Pankhurst (in Nickel, 1978) did a statistically based EA on the use of English articles by Slavic learners. This study produced significantly different results from the informal teacher-based EA. As a result, this led to a re-formulation of teaching strategies.

Another contribution to EA comes from Silvester (in Nickel, 1978) who also did an EA study of English learners of the German language. This study comprised a stylistic comparison of the written German language of a group of English learners of German and a group of German native speakers ranging from 16 - 19 years old. Silvester found that the instruction of German concentrated on the 'sentence' as the ultimate unit of grammar. Consequently, recommendations were made that for advanced levels, the analysis of 'text' would be more

contributive to the learner to help him improve his communicative effectiveness in the FL.

Meziani (1984) studied the errors made by Morrocan students learning ESL. He categorised the 530 errors produced by the students into thirteen types. The most number of errors (39.2 %) were due to wrong usage of tenses, followed by prepositional errors (17.8 %) and articles (17.7 %).

A study by Rogers (1984) analysed the errors made by 26 first year English university students who were learning German as a SL on the basis of lexis, morphology and syntax. Her analysis also proved that intralingual errors were predominant, with 35 % of the errors concentrated at the syntactic level. These findings were synonymous to a research done by Ramiah (1989). He used the EA theoretical framework to identify the linguistic difficulties encountered by 180 Secondary Four Express Tamil stream students from 9 Tamil schools in Singapore. He analyzed their compositions for the tabulation of errors. The non-interference developmental errors were predominant (96.18 %) while the interference errors were insignificant (3.82 %).

3.4.2 EA Studies In Malaysia And Singapore

3.4.2.1 EA Studies In Other Languages

Most EA studies deal with the learning problems encountered within an EA framework . One of the earliest studies in Malaysia includes Mukhtaruddin's (1967) study on the difficulties faced by non-Malay students learning Bahasa Melayu as their SL. He studied the most common grammatical errors found in the compositions of a group of non-Malay undergraduates of the University of Malaya. His study of the students' errors revealed that the most difficult aspect of language for them was the use of Malay affixes. This study was followed by Koh Boh Boon (1974). He analysed the common errors in the use of Malay affixes by non-Malays preparing for the Malaysian Certificate of Education Bahasa Malaysia paper.

In a study made by Sreedharan (1986), the errors of 33 Tamil final year students of a teacher's training college in Kuala Lumpur, were identified and classified. His test instrument was the dictation of two passages and the errors of the students were subsequently analysed under twelve categories. His findings reveal that the highest number of errors (45 %) was made in morphophonemics.

Suraiya Mohd. Ali (1989) did an examination of case particle errors in the written products of Malay learners of Japanese. Data was gathered from two groups of Malay learners at Ambang Asuhan Jepun in the University of Malaya. The elicitation technique used was a "fill-in the bracket" task. The results of her thesis showed that 72.6 % of the errors were intralingual and 18.3 % were interlingual.

An EA study of the Bahasa Melayu compositions of primary school students from the Tamil medium was conducted by Raman (1993). He chose these students as his sample respondents because of their generally poor performance in the Bahasa Melayu paper for the UPSR examination. His data was elicited from 80 compositions written by 40 students. The test instrument consisted of two types of compositions - picture based and an expansion of given notes. The linguistic areas of analysis covered sentence structures, vocabulary, affixes, punctuation and spelling. The findings revealed that the students' errors reflected interference from their MT (i.e., Tamil) and the influence of colloquial Bahasa Melayu.

Krishnan (1993) did an investigation of the acquisition of Malay affixes by primary pupils of Tamil schools. In his study, he used the EA methodology. His subjects were

fifty primary six students. His study revealed that 47 % of the errors accounted for, displayed the students' ignorance of rule restrictions and overgeneralisation. The subjects' MT did not have any significant effect on their errors.

3.4.2.2 EA Studies In English

A lot of local EA studies in English has also been carried out by many researchers. Fonseka (1968) used a CA framework to make significant comparisons between the whole grammatical structures of English and the Malay language. Her study made several predictions of possible errors that a Malay learner of English would face.

Yap (1973) used an EA framework instead. This researcher analysed the free compositions of 497 children in a primary school. Each child was given four topics to write on and then, the types and frequencies of the errors caused by the students were examined. Comparisons were made between grade levels, levels of intelligence, sex, race and the medium of instruction (i.e. Malay/English Language). The highest frequency of errors occurred in the verb category.

A study of English nouns and verb phrases was carried out among 320 students learning English at Forms One and Two in Malaysia by Gill (1974). Each student had to write two types of compositions, namely the narrative and descriptive forms. The findings of the study revealed that verb phrase errors formed a significant area of problem for learners.

Angela Lee (1986) classified errors in the writings of 65 Form Five students. Each of her subjects wrote two narrative passages. The method of data elicitation used was dictation. The results of her study highlighted the fact that 35.7% of the errors involved nouns and 21.1 % were verb errors. This researcher arranged the errors into 9 categories, ranking them according to their frequency of occurrence. She concluded that some of these errors were the result of first language transfer but most them were intralingual.

Fatimah Diana (1986) submitted a thesis on the errors made by ITM (KL) students in written compositions. The corpus for this study was taken from 60 ESL students from the Science and non-Science streams at random. Her study was limited to the comparison of global, local and syntactic errors. On analysis, the study revealed a high mean of 25.916 for local syntactic errors whereas a low

mean of 1,833 was recorded for global syntactic errors. This statistical evidence indicates that her subjects have very poor writing ability as far as sentence construction is concerned. The study concluded that students did not exhibit incompetency to learn English but that they had different levels of writing ability that showed learning was taking place.

Another study by P. Singh (1989) deals with errors in the use of interrogatives such as "Wh-questions," "Yes-No questions," "alternative questions" and "Tag questions". The sample respondents for this study were Malay learners of the English Language. The samples consisted of 100 L1 BM/L2 English Form Four and Form Five students. The researcher used the EA framework and reinforced his findings by applying the same test to another 100 L1 English/L2 BM learners in the same forms. The IL data was analysed using Corder's (1981) framework and Dulay and Burt's Surface Strategy Taxonomy. The study confirmed that most errors were intralingual errors (68.4 %) while interlingual errors accounted for 5.5 % only. These findings provided further empirical support that L2 learners follow a similar development route as L1 learners in the acquisition of certain interrogative structures.

Nair's (1990) study consisted of 60 students from two secondary schools in Kuantan. These students were ethnic Malays from Form 5. The instruments used to elicit the language corpus for analysis comprised of three compositions of expository, imaginative and argumentative textual types. This study analysed finite and non-finite verbs using Sridhar's (1981) method of identifying, classifying and calculating the relative frequency of errors.

Another research to be borne in mind is the study on the use of affixes by Malay ESL learners in ITM. This study was conducted by Martin (1992) using the EA framework. Her sample consisted of the written work of ITM students using Davies' (1977) proficiency test which assesses what has been learned from a given/known syllabus. The sample respondents numbered 98 and on analysis of the data gathered, the results featured the tendency of students to create words or forms which were non-existent. Such errors constituted 58 % of the errors made in the whole test. The second most common type of error constituted words which were erroneous (i.e. structurally well-formed but inappropriate). These errors amounted to 26.5 % of the errors made in the test. Using Richard's (1971) taxonomy, Martin found that in addition to intralingual and developmental errors, other errors could be

attributed to the process of transfer as postulated by Selinker (1972).

3.4.3   EA Studies On Conjunctions

Ghadessy (1976) did a pilot test on the errors found in 25 written assignments done by freshmen at the Pahlavi University in Iran. The samples were obtained from a population of 370 students who were classified according to the results of a diagnostic test administered prior to the pilot study. The achievement test included a written assignment of approximately 150 - 200 words on one of three topics. Ghadessy adopted Duskova's (1969) error classification system for Type One Errors. Type One Errors describe errors within sentences (e.g. lexical, morphological) whereas Type Two Errors relate to the relationship between sentences and their combination. Ghadessy applied Corder's (1981) schema for idiosyncratic sentences in Type Two Errors. The findings on Type Two Errors distinctly revealed that the freshmen had not yet developed the skill of reducing sentences by either using conjunctions or embedding. Their sentences were mostly simple "kernel" sentences. Consequently, their written work was monotonous as words, phrases and sentences were repeated frequently.

Thus, the review of literature shows that much research has been done on EA. Teh (1993) states:

> "... subsequently, a more positive attitude towards errors has also emerged ... This positive attitude towards errors is especially important in the wake of the communicative approach to language learning and teaching in the 1990s. Language teaching in this country is currently focussing on the teaching and learning of the four language skills ... not grammar per se .... some learners tend to de-emphasise its importance and ... make many more errors ... Thus, rekindling interest in the area of learner errors ... can be considered a timely move."
>
> (1993: 53)

To this researcher, subordinating conjunctions is an area in grammar that proves **insurmountable** to students. To this researcher's knowledge, no local studies have been made between L2 English and L1 Bahasa Melayu students' command of subordinating conjunctions solely. This study will hence be a first attempt. While there are many longitudinal studies on EA, the present study will only be a cross-sectional one. Even though a cross sectional study cannot investigate as deeply or as thoroughly as a longitudinal one can, the researcher will monitor the study so that it is beneficial for both students and teachers, as well as future researchers.

Furthermore, in light of the empirical evidence contrib-
uted by researchers, that suggests interlingual errors
play a minor role in L2 acquisition, the researcher will
adopt the EA method so as to monitor the learners' pro-
gress and create a greater awareness of the errors made
by the learner.