CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.0 Introduction

This chapter presents an overview of related literature which forms the theoretical framework of the study. This includes the importance of vocabulary learning, Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis, Error Analysis Hypothesis, Learners' Errors, Interlingual and Intralingual Errors as well as a review of related studies on lexical errors.

2.1 The Importance of Vocabulary Learning

The term vocabulary can be defined as a list or set of words for a particular language that individual speakers of a language might use (Hatch & Brown 1995:1). Experienced teachers of English as a second language know very well how important vocabulary is. After all, words are vital in linguistic communication (Ellis 1985). They form language. The significance of vocabulary learning is best expressed by Wilkins (1972) in Singleton (1999:9) when he states that "without grammar very little can be conveyed, without vocabulary nothing can be conveyed."
The mastery of vocabulary is also acknowledged by Krashen and Terrell who contend that “vocabulary is basic to communication” (1973:155). This is because lexical items are needed in order to convey messages. Relating to the importance of vocabulary to second language learners, Krashen and Terrell (1973:155) state that “and if they wish to express some idea or ask for information, they must be able to produce lexical items to convey their meanings.”

Vocabulary learning is therefore crucial to language learners. Vocabulary learning, however, takes more than just knowing the words (Taylor 1990). This is because vocabulary items can be defined in terms of their form and meanings. Taylor (1990) suggests several aspects of vocabulary items that students need to learn in order to fully understand the forms and meaning of the words.

First, students need to have knowledge of morphology as lexical items can take different forms (and imply different meanings) when affixes are added to the root words. For example, ‘dissatisfaction’ is derived from ‘satisfy’. The prefix “dis” denotes opposite and the suffix “-tion” signifies a noun. Thus, ‘dissatisfaction’ implies the state of not being satisfied. But if a learner does not have this knowledge of morphology, he will not know what the affixes mean, as well as the meaning of the word itself.

Second, knowledge of collocation is necessary as there are words in English that keep company with certain lexical items and must be used together to form meanings. For instance, the term “in black and white”, which refers to recorded writing in print. Individually the word “black” and the word “white” represent
colours, but when combined, they form a whole new meaning. Without the knowledge of collocation, a learner will assume that 'in black and white' implies having both colours, black and white respectively.

Third, learners need to have semantic knowledge which refers to knowing the meanings of words - their denotations and connotations. Take for example the word "big". Literally it means "of considerable size", but when used in the following sentence, "She is big", the word "big" would imply an offensive connotation. The sentence may suggest that the lady is fat. Thus, a learner needs to know the different connotations that lexical items possess so that they are able to use the vocabulary effectively and convey their meanings accurately.

Fourth is the knowledge of the register of the words. This means being able to use the words in various situations. For example, "Would you like a cigarette?" is acceptable in most situations. However, "Want a fag?" is only acceptable if used among friends. Strangers would consider such an expression rude.

Fifth, knowledge of frequency of words which means knowing the degree of probability of encountering the words in spoken and written language. This knowledge of probability enables learners to recognize that certain words appear more frequent in speech than in writing for example 'actually' and 'well'. Other lexical items like "former" and "latter" may appear only in written language.

Next the knowledge of polysemy which refers to different meanings associated with a word. The word "present" for instance can have three different meanings. "a
gift” (e.g a birthday present), “not absent” (e.g being present at a gathering) and “to deliver” (e.g to present a speech).

Last but not least, the knowledge of the equivalent of the word in the first language. Though translation is not encouraged in classroom teaching, it seems useful especially when explanation in the target language poses difficulty. Translation thus, saves time (Taylor 1990: 1 – 3).

Taylor’s views imply that there are many aspects of lexis that need to be learned by learners. This knowledge will not only reduce the learners’ chances of making errors but also help the learners to convey their intended meanings more effectively.

2.2 Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis

Contrastive analysis (CA) is a linguistic analytical technique developed by Bloomfield (1933 cited in Tan 1994) to enable a scientific and detailed analysis of a language to be carried out. Among the prominent linguists associated with CA are Fries (1945) and Lado (1957). The CA hypothesis claims that interference in second language learning comes from the individual’s mother tongue. The learner’s errors are likely to occur due to the differences between both languages, namely the native language and the second language.
The CA hypothesis is related to the Behaviourist Language Theory and Structural Linguistics which emphasise that language learning is a process of habit-formation (Dulay and Burt 1974, Littlewood 1984, Fries in Odlin 1989 : 15). From the behaviourist point of view, these first language (L1) habits can either facilitate or hinder second language (L2) learning (Ellis 1985, Ringbom 1987, Littlewood 1989). In situations where first language habits are helpful in acquiring second language habits, it is called positive transfer (Ringbom 1987 : 58) as he states that “positive L1 transfer was taken to mean that the first language had a facilitating effect on L2 learning”.

In addition, the learner’s first language habits become useful when there are similarities between the learner’s mother tongue and the target language. This is expressed by Lado (1957 : 2) as he mentions that “those elements that are similar to his native language will be simple to him”.

Similar opinion is also shared by Dulay, Burt and Krashen (1982 : 97) who view positive transfer as the automatic use of the L1 structures in L2 performance when the situation in both languages is the same, resulting in correct utterances.

Negative transfer, on the other hand, occurs when previous learning habits (i.e that of the learner’s first language) become a major obstacle to the learning of the target language (Ellis 1985). Negative transfer takes place when there are differences between the structures and systems in the mother tongue and the second language Lado (1957). He contends that “…and those elements that are different will be difficult” (Lado 1957 : 2)
This interference then, causes errors in the learner's second language structures. Dulay, Burt and Krashen (1982:97) reiterate the fact that the differences in the learner's native language and the second language can prevent second language acquisition as implied in their statement, "where structures in the L1 differ from those in the L2, errors that affected L2 would be produced. Such errors were said to be due to the influence of the learner's L1 habits on L2 production."

Careful description of the structures of the native language and target language, therefore, makes it possible to predict the difficulties faced by second language learners (Lado 1957, Lim 1976, Ellis 1985). The CA hypothesis ability to predict learner's difficulties is affirmed by Lado (1957:9) as he states that "we can predict and describe the patterns that will cause difficulty in learning, those that will not cause difficulty, by comparing systematically the language and culture to be learned with the native language and culture of the student."

CA predictive power is also acknowledged by Oller (1971:1 as cited in James 1998:145) who suggests that CA is "...a device for predicting points of difficulty and some of the errors that learner will make."

By means of CA, learner's difficulties in acquiring a second language – as reflected by the errors produced – can be identified. This information can further be beneficial to teachers and syllabus planners in preparing teaching materials (Dulay, Burt and Krashen 1982). Lado (1957:i) in his Preface to Language Across Cultures states that "the results of such comparison have proved a
fundamental value for the preparation of teaching materials, test and language learning experiments."

Richards, Platt and Platt (1993: 83) define CA as a linguistic approach that is based on the assumption that "teaching materials can make use of CA to reduce the effects of interference."

CA, thus, was the favoured approach for studying second language learning. The validity of CA approach, however, was questioned by some scholars (Selinker 1972, Oller 1973, Richards 1974, Dulay and Burt 1974). Findings from a study carried out by (George 1972 in Ellis 1985: 29) reveal that first language interference is only responsible for approximately 30% of the total number of errors made by learners. Dulay and Burt (1974: 173) conclude from their research that only 5% of the errors produced by second language learners can be attributed to first language interference and 85% are developmental errors. Ellis (1985: 29) quotes that Mukattash's (1977) research on Jordanian students reveals that 23% of errors made are due to L1-Arabic influence. Richards (1974) also contends that other than interlingual errors, there are also other errors which he refers to as intralingual and developmental errors. These findings indicate that CA alone cannot help to predict and explain much about the errors made by learners in second language learning.

The mounting criticism against the CA approach to explain all errors made by the learner, however, does not mean that this hypothesis should not be considered at all when analysing second language learning process. Mother tongue interference still
plays a significant role in second language acquisition. Many researchers have acknowledged that a large proportion of second language learner’s errors are traceable to native language influence (Corder 1967, Hocking 1973). Hocking (1973) states that

Mother tongue interference only accounts for a part of any learner’s difficulties. Nevertheless, it is an important part. Interference problems are distinctly more persistent than others; it is not, in my experience, uncommon to find speakers of English as an L2 whose only surviving mistakes are all of this kind.

Hocking (1973:95)

Hocking’s view thus, suggests that, contrastive analysis does indeed have a place in the study of second language acquisition.

2.3 Error Analysis Hypothesis

The contrastive analysis hypothesis was questioned by many scholars (Ravem 1968, Richards 1971, Dulay and Burt 1974, James 1998). CA was criticised because it could not account for the vast majority of errors made by the language learner. The rejection of CA as ‘the tool’ in analysing learner’s errors has resulted in the emergence of error analysis (EA) in the 1960s.

EA, as implied by its name, deals with the study and analysis of errors made by second language learners. Unlike CA, EA is able to identify not only errors resulted from mother tongue interference, but also those attributed to the
difficulties arising within the target language itself. This ability has then made EA a practical alternative in second language research as pointed by Strevens (1965 cited in Lim 1976).

Besides being able to identify the causes of learner errors, EA is also carried out to identify the learner's linguistic development in acquiring the second language. Learner errors give an indication of the process of language learning experienced by the learner. This notion is supported by Corder (1981:10) who states that "a learner's errors, then, provide evidence of the system of the language that he is using (i.e has learned) at a particular point in the course (and it must be repeated that he is using some system, although it is not yet the right system)."

EA, therefore, can be viewed as a way to analyse the errors a second language learner makes in order to discover his knowledge of the second language to date and how he learns it. Corder's (1974) statement, thus, suggests that learner's errors are indicative of the system or hypothesis that he is testing in the process of second language learning. Corder (1981:1) reiterates the function of EA as being relevant to the study of the language acquisition process that "a study of learners' errors is part of the systematic study of the learners' language which is itself necessary to an understanding of the process of second language acquisition."

The study of learners' errors by means of EA, hence, makes it possible to identify learners' progress in learning a second language. EA provides evidence of what has been learned as well as what is left to be learned.
From the pedagogical perspective, learners’ errors are crucial feedback to the teaching and learning scenario (Lim 1976, Webber 1981, Sharma 1981, Talif and Edwin 1989, Mohideen 1998, Haded 1998). Mohideen (1998:47) mentions that “error analysis is useful in second language learning because this will reveal to us – teachers, syllabus designers and textbook writers – the problem areas. We could design remedial exercises and focus more attention on the trouble spots.”

Haded (1998:56) shares similar views by saying that “error analysis has two goals; firstly, as a tool of general linguistics in order to elicit information on second language acquisition, and secondly, as a technique of applied linguistics dedicated for linguistic approach and improvement of teaching material.”

Sharma (1981:21), who also acknowledges the function of EA, sees EA as a way of “evolving a suitable and effective teaching – learning strategy and remedial measures.”

Error analysis has proven that it is able to identify both second language learners’ errors and is useful in providing valuable information of the learners’ learning process. Learners’ errors also provide information which in turn aids teaching. Consequently, teachers can help learners in learning the second language by giving better and more effective exercises. Based on the reasons put forward, it is therefore, practical to employ the error analysis approach in the study of second language acquisition. This study, thus, will be conducted by means of the error analysis approach.
2.4 Procedures of an Error Analysis Research

Corder (1971) proposes 3 main procedures in an error analysis study: recognition or identification of errors, description of errors and explanation of errors. These procedures are logically dependent upon each other. The first procedure, that is the identification of errors, involves the recognition of errors, whether in the written or spoken forms. Description of errors follows next when recognition has taken place. This involves the description of the nature of the errors. The third procedure, that is the explanation of errors, involves explaining how the learner has deviated from the rules of the second language, what rules he has broken, substituted or ignored. In other words, this final procedure involves explaining the reasons why a learner has deviated from the rules of the second language.

2.5 Learners' Errors

The word error is defined as the use of a linguistic item (e.g. a word, a grammatical item) in a way which a fluent or native speaker of a language regards as showing faulty or incomplete (Richards, Platt & Platt 1993: 127). Burt, Dulay and Krashen (1982: 138) refer errors to a systematic deviation of a selected norm. James (1998: 78) defines error as being an instance of language that is unintentionally deviant and is not self-corrugible by its author. For Edge (1989 cited in James 1998: 80) errors are wrong forms that the pupil could not correct even if their wrongness were to be pointed out.
In general, errors can be categorised into *errors of performance* and *errors of competence*. Errors of performance are non-systematic and the results of some failure in performance. Corder (1974: 123) calls them 'lapses' and 'mistakes'. These deviant forms are made by the language learner through carelessness, tiredness, excitement or bad habits (Corder 1974: 123). The frequency of these lapses or 'slips of tongue' tends to increase as a result of stress, indecision and fatigue. The learner, in this case, knows the correct rules or lexical items but fails to apply them in specific instances due to tiredness, for example. These kinds of errors are readily corrected by the learner himself (Corder 1981). These lapses and mistakes have no immediate relevance to the problem of language learning and are of no relevance to an error analysis research. Corder (1981) comments that it is often difficult to distinguish between a learner's errors and his mistakes or lapses. This particular situation according to Corder (1981) does not only happen to second language learners but to native speakers as well.

Errors of competence, on the other hand, are systematic and caused by the learner's inadequate knowledge of the rules and system of the target language. These types of errors reflect the learner's underlying knowledge of the language he is learning at that point of time. Corder (1981) refers to this as the learner's 'transitional competence.' The errors of competence, thus, are significant to the error analyst as they indicate the learner's progress in the second language acquisition process. The importance of such errors is stressed by Corder (1981)

They are significant in three different ways. First, to the teacher, in that they tell him, if he undertakes a systematic analysis, how far towards the goal the learner has progressed and, consequently, what remains for him to learn. Second, they provide to the researcher how language is learnt or
acquired, what strategies or procedures the learner is employing in his discovery of the language. Thirdly (and in a sense this is their most important aspect) they are indispensable to the learner himself, because we regard the making of errors as a device the learner uses in order to learn.

Corder (1981:10)

According to Corder (1974), the second language learner acquires different rules and systems of the second language along the process of second language acquisition. The nature and progress of the learner's acquisition of the second language are reflected in the errors produced. Thus, by analysing the learner's errors at different stages of his learning, the error analyst can identify the learner's knowledge of the target language to date. According to Corder (1974:131), there are 3 stages in second language learning that are evidenced by the nature of the occurrence of the learner's errors, namely the pre-systematic stage, the systematic stage and the post-systematic stage.

In the pre-systematic stage, the learner is not aware or vaguely aware of the rules and system of the target language. His errors are inconsistent. Occasionally, he may get the correct forms by accident but most of the time he gets them wrong. As he has not realised that there is a particular system in the language he is learning, he, therefore, is unable to correct his own errors or give reasons for making such errors.

The systematic stage refers to a stage when the learner makes errors on a regular basis. In this stage, he has discovered the function of the second language system and has been trying to test his hypothesis. He, however, still makes some errors
due to inadequate and imperfect knowledge of the system and rules of the target language. At this phase, the learner is still unable to correct his errors independently, but he can explain what he is aiming at (i.e. the rules he is employing).

The final stage, the post-systematic stage, is when a learner produces correct forms of the target language inconsistently. This happens when the learner fails to apply the rules of the target language correctly at all times although he has learned the rules. In this stage, however, the learner is able to correct his errors as well as explain what is wrong.

These stages of learning, according to Corder (1974: 131), can provide information on the learner’s progress in second language acquisition and can be of use in identifying the learner’s problems in the process of second language learning.

2.5.1 Interlingual Errors

Interlingual errors refer to errors which occur due to interference of the mother tongue. These errors are committed when there are differences between the systems of the native language and second language. The errors, in this case, reflect the first language structure in the second language production.
The findings from the research conducted by George (1972) as cited by Ellis (1985:29) reveal that approximately 33% of errors produced are interlingual errors. Dulay and Burt (1974), contend that 5% of errors produced by Spanish-speaking children are accountable to first language influence.

Though the studies mentioned above imply that interlingual errors are not responsible for a large number of errors produced by second language learners, mother tongue interference still plays an important part in the acquisition of a second language (Hocking 1973, Ringbom 1987). This is affirmed by Hocking (1973:95) when he states that "Interference problems are distinctly more persistent than others."

2.5.2 Intralingual Errors

Errors produced as a result of the difficulty arising within the target language itself are termed as intralingual errors (Richards 1974:173). Such errors reflect the general hypothesis about the target language that is made during the learning process (Ervin-Tripp 1970, Duskova 1969 cited in Bhatia 1974:339). Duskova (1969 as cited in Bhatia 1974:339) investigates the sources of errors made by Czech second language learners of English. Her findings suggest that the students' errors are not only the result of native language interference but also due to interference between the forms of the language being learnt, in both grammar and lexis. These errors are said to be due to overgeneralization. Richards (1971) carried out studies of English errors made by speakers of Japanese, Chinese, Burmese,
French, Czech, Polish, Tagalog, Maori, Maltese and the major Indian and West African languages. He concludes that the intralingual errors could be the outcome of overgeneralization, ignorance of rule restriction, incomplete application of rules and false concepts hypothesized (Richards 1971: 206). Other studies conducted (Lim 1976, Tan 1994, Mi Yang 1996 and Raja Zarina 1997) also revealed similar results.

Richards (1974) identifies other sources of intralingual errors besides overgeneralization. According to Richards (1974), the difficulties faced by second language learners arising within the target language also involve ignorance of rules restriction, incomplete application of rules and false concepts hypothesized. These terms are explained as follows.

i. Overgeneralization

Jakobovits (1970 cited in Richards 1974:174) terms overgeneralization as

"the use of available strategies in new situations...In second language learning...some of these strategies will prove helpful in organizing the facts about the second language, but others, perhaps due to superficial similarities, will be misleading and inapplicable."

Overgeneralization occurs when the learner constructs a deviant form based on his experience of other structures in the target language. In other words, this means that the learner applies one rule to the structures in the target language.
For example, when a learner has learned that the prefix 'un' means the opposite as in

a. My mother is unhappy with my results.

The learner then creates

b.* The little girl is unpretty.

In this instance, the learner has extended the rules or forms that he has learned to contexts in the target language which are inappropriate.

ii. Ignorance of Rule Restrictions

This is closely related to (i). The learner has learned the rule in the second language system but not the exceptions to the particular rules in question. These errors usually result from making incorrect analogies or from the "rote learning of rules". For instance, a learner has learned

a. The students talk to each other during the seminar.

He then produces

b.* We ask to the teacher about the examination.
In this case, the learner has failed to see that in this context the word 'to' cannot be used following "ask" and thus commits an error.

iii. **Incomplete Application of Rules**

This refers to the occurrence of deviant structures which reflect inadequate development of rules needed in order to produce correct utterances or expressions. For example, the use of "a lot of" and "much". Both signify plurality but cannot be used indiscriminately. To illustrate,

a. There are a lot of books in the library.

b. *I saw much boys playing football in the field.

The learner has learned that "a lot" signifies plurality, thus, assumed that the word "much" can also be used for countable nouns. It is grammatically acceptable to say "a lot of books" as in sentence (a), but in sentence (b) it is ungrammatically to say "much boys".

iv. **False Concepts Hypothesized**

This refers to false or wrong hypothesis which the second language learner forms about the second language. For instance, a learner has wrongly used the
word “too” in place of the word “very” because he assumes that both share the same meaning and can be used interchangeably as in the following examples

a. The house is too small for a family of ten.

b. * I was too happy to receive your letter.

It is grammatically acceptable to use “too” in sentence (a) but in sentence (b) it is not grammatically acceptable. Here, the learner has failed to understand that the word “too” suggests “enough to cause a problem” and it is only used in situations where something is wrong. As a result, he commits an error.

2.6 Interlanguage

The term interlanguage was first used by Selinker (1972). It refers to the learner’s personal linguistic system that he creates in order to learn the target language. The learner’s language is a sort of a hybrid between his first and second language. It is formed on some linguistic elements that are similar to the native language and the second language, and some of which are untraceable to either the mother tongue or the second language he is learning. A few other alternative terms have been used by different researchers to refer to the learner’s language namely, ‘transitional competence’ (Corder 1967), ‘idiosyncratic dialect’ (Corder 1971), ‘approximative system’ (Nemser 1971) and ‘interlingue’ (James 1977 in Corder 1981).
According to Nemser (1971:55), the ‘approximative system’ works on the following assumptions:

i) learner’s speech at any given time is the patterned product of a linguistic system, an approximative system distinct from the first and second language,

ii) the learner’s approximative system at successive stages of learning forms an evolving series, and

iii) the approximative system of learners at the same stage of proficiency coincides with variation ascribable to difficulties in learning exposure.

These assumptions imply that the learner’s interlanguage is systematic, constantly changing and it reflects the present difficulties faced by the learner in learning the second language. Selinker (1972), however, assumes that there are psychological structures in the brain which are activated when one begins to learn a second language. He further states that the cognitive strategies are accountable for the second language utterances produced by learners of a second language.

Selinker (1972) also claims that a learner’s interlanguage is permanent. He proposes the term “fossilization” to refer to certain permanent characteristics of the learner’s language. According to Selinker, the fossilizable linguistics phenomena include linguistic items, rules and subsystems that speakers of a native
language will retain if their interlanguage relates to the particular second language regardless of the amount of instructions and practices he receives in the second language.

Fossilization, according to Selinker (1972:37), is the result of the following 5 principle processes:

i) **Language Transfer**

The learner’s interlanguage occurs as a result of negative transfer from the mother tongue to the second language.

ii) **Transfer of Training**

The learner’s interlanguage is the result of faulty instruction the learner received in his acquisition of the second language.

iii) **Strategies of Second Language Learning**

The learner’s interlanguage is the result of the learner’s approach to the material to be learned.
iv) **Strategies of Second Language Communication**

The learner’s interlanguage is the result of the learner’s approach to communicate with native speakers of the second language.

v) **Overgeneralization of Target Language Linguistic Material**

The learner’s interlanguage is the result of overgeneralization of target language linguistic rules and semantic features.

### 2.7 Studies on Lexical Errors

This section will look at studies that have been carried out on lexical errors. The research also seeks to identify how lexical errors are classified in the studies.

One way to categorise lexical errors is in terms of the sorts of knowledge of words that people have (Richards 1976, James 1998). As suggested by Richards (1976:80) in James (1998:144) there are 7 aspects one should know about a word. These include i) its morphology, ii) its syntactic behaviour, iii) its functional or situational restrictions, iv) its frequency i.e. how likely the word is to be used— that is its frequency, v) its semantic values or denotation, vi) its secondary meaning or connotation, and vii) what other words it is associated with. James (1998:144) further divides these seven categories into formal and semantic features. Features i), ii), iii) and iv) are formal, while the remaining three are semantic.
The formal : semantic distinction is “justified empirically” (James 1998 : 144).
Henning (1973 cited in James 1998 : 144) conducted a vocabulary-learning experiment which involved foreign language learners spotting, in texts read aloud to them, the lexical items that they could see printed on a card before them. Results showed that the FL learners stored and accessed their FL vocabulary according to the two criteria of form : meaning and that the less proficient learners prefer form-based (phonological) storage while the more proficient learners prefer semantic storage (Henning 1973 : 191 in James 1998 : 145). Meara’s study (1984 in James 1998 : 145) revealed that lexical errors produced by the learners showed some kind of phonological or orthographic confusion.

According to James (1998) formal errors can be categorised into 3 main types namely formal misselection, misformations and distortions. Formal misselection refers to errors which involve the pairs or triples of words that look or sound similar (James 1998 : 145). Different linguists label such errors differently. Laufer (1992) calls them synforms, Room (1979) calls them confusibles and Phythian (1989) calls them confusables (cited in James 1998 : 145). Laufer (1992 in James 1998 : 145) identifies 6 ways in which pairs of synforms can be similar. According to her, synforms can i) have the same number of syllables, ii) have the same stress pattern, iii) be of the same word class, iv) have the same initial part, v) have some phonemes in common and vi) have phonemes with shared features. The synforms were later categorized into 4 main types which are i) the suffix type, ii) the prefix type, iii) the vowel-based type and iv) the consonant-based type. A crucial feature of synforms or confusibles is that a real existent word is used (James 1998 : 146).
Misformations refer to lexical items which do not exist in the target language. They may originate either in the mother tongue or are created by the learner from the resources of the target language itself (James 1998: 150). They are 3 types, namely, *borrowing* which refers to the use of a MT (mother tongue) word in the target language, *coinage* which refers to the use of a new word (derived from TL – target language) and adapted to the structure of the TL, and *calque* which refers to the use of a word literally translated from the MT.

James (1998: 150) defines *distortions* as errors of forms created without the recourse to the L1 resources. These forms do not exist in the TL (unlike confusibles) and they result from the misapplication of one or more of the processing operations: omission, overinclusion, misselection, misordering and blending.

As for semantic errors in lexis, James (1998: 151) proposes 2 main types which are *confusion of sense relations* and *collocational errors*.

This formal: semantic distinction is also employed by other researchers. Lam (1981) who analysed errors made by Chinese learners at tertiary levels also categorised the lexical errors into different error types. In her study, she divided the errors into 3 main categories, namely, wrong word, wrong word for a phrase and vice versa, and wrong phrase. Each of these categories was further subdivided. She divided the wrong word errors into orthographic or phonemic similarity, similarity in meaning and interference. For errors categorised as wrong word for a phrase and vice versa, Lam looked into the morphology of the lexical items. The errors termed
as wrong phrase refer to those that occur due to mispronunciation. She also explained that some of the learners’ errors could be traced to overgeneralization of rules while others were due to insufficient knowledge or the learners’ inability to communicate precisely.

Teh (1989) conducted an error analysis study using written data produced by Malay students at the International Islamic University. Besides looking at students’ ‘syntactical errors’, she also studied their lexical errors. She classified these errors into six broad categories, namely, poor choice of word, wrong form of word used, wrong word being used, use of slang or colloquialism, the use non-English word (coined indiscriminately) and redundant or repetitious use of words.

Ho (1973) carried out an error analysis study on 13 Chinese-medium pre-university students studying English as a second language in Institute of Education Singapore. Based on written compositions, Ho came up with a classification of errors which was made in terms of types of errors found in the data. The errors were organised into seven general categories. They were (i) articles; (ii) number in nouns; (iii) verbs; (iv) function words; (iv) lexical items (form and meaning); (vi) sentence structure and (vii) spelling. The findings reveal that there were 656 lexical errors identified from a total of 4813 errors. Pertaining to lexical errors, Ho discovered that these errors can be divided into mistakes in lexical selection, verbs (including phrasal verbs), formal and semantic similarity of words.

Seow (1984) analysed language learning strategies used by adult Malays learning English as a second language. She categorised lexical errors according to 9
different strategies employed by the learners. The categories were (i) language transfer which referred to errors that indicate negative transfer from the Malay language; (ii) phonemic similarity which referred to erroneous words that were phonetically similar but unrelated to the correct forms; (iii) semantic similarity which referred to deviant words that were semantically close to the intended meanings but were not appropriately used; (iv) paraphrase referred to situations when learner produced deviant lexical items or awkward structures to approximate his intended meanings; (v) tautology which referred to the repetition of some elements that had been used earlier; (vi) slips of tongue which reflected performance mistakes; (vii) verbs of movement which involved erroneous verbs as results of confusion over direction of movement; (viii) indeterminacy which dealt with sentences that were not understood by the reader because of the existence of erroneous words in the particular sentences and finally (ix) misplacement which referred to situations when the correct lexical items were wrongly positioned in a linguistic context within the sentence (i.e. word-order errors). Categories (viii) and (ix) are also syntactical errors.

Seow later concluded that lexical errors occur due to poor command of vocabulary. She also suggested that conscious teaching of vocabulary could be the initial step towards helping second language learners enhance listening comprehension and speech production. She noted that vocabulary teaching is often neglected in many classrooms today, especially at the secondary level. She observed that vocabulary learning in most schools is merely a written exercise where students are asked to look up the meaning of words in the dictionary. The researcher believes that as vocabulary does not form in isolation, this sort of exercise is not of much use.
Duskova (1969 cited in Bhatia 1974) analysed the grammatical and lexical errors of 50 Czech postgraduate students of English. Duskova concluded that there were 233 lexical errors out of 1007 of the errors identified. She classified the lexical errors into 4 categories which are i) confusion of words on the ground of formal similarity; ii) confusion of words that occurred between related words with similar meaning; iii) misuse of words due to the fact that Czech words have several equivalents; and iv) distortions. She later classified the learners' lexical errors into two main categories namely intralingual and interlingual errors. The intralingual errors include errors due to confusion of words on the ground of formal similarity and confusion of words that occurred between related words with similar meanings. The interlingual errors are errors resulting from misuse of words due to the fact that Czech words have several equivalents and distortions.

Her findings suggested that students' errors are not only due to native language interference, but also result from interference between the forms of the language being learnt. At lexis level, the words and phrases are often confused as a result of formal similarity. This illustrates what Selinker (1972) and Richards (1974) term as overgeneralization of target language rules.

Politzer and Ramirez (1973) carried out a study on spoken English collected from a sample of Mexican children in a bilingual (English and Spanish) and a monolingual (Spanish) school. Deviations from the standard English were analysed and classified into 3 main types – morphological errors, syntactical errors and lexical errors. The lexical errors were further categorised based on the source of errors. They were errors of signifiers, selection of inappropriate words and
semantic confusion. Politzer and Ramirez (1973) later traced the causes of errors and considered the plausible causes for the errors being interlingual which refers to Spanish (mother tongue) influence; intralingual errors which were errors committed due to confusion arising within the target language and developmental errors; and errors due to the intrusion of non-standard English dialects.

Shaughnessy (1977) studied the vocabulary used by 3 levels of writers that are the basic writers, the intermediate writers and the advanced writers. She noted that learners made vocabulary errors because they have "a blurred sense of the meaning and form of a word" (1977:189). As a result, learners made vocabulary errors such as i) wrong form of a word – the erroneous form produces a word which does not exist in the target language; ii) errors with derivational suffixes; iii) inappropriate choice of word – substituting for the appropriate word a more familiar word that is phonetically similar but semantically unrelated to the word the reader expects; and iv) wrong use of words which are semantically close to the intended meanings. Her study, thus, revealed learners made formal and semantic errors of vocabulary items.

Tan (1994) conducted an error analysis study on lexical errors produced by 115 Malay students of the Ausmat Programme in the MARA Institute of Technology (ITM). In her analysis of written data provided by the subjects, she found that the lexical errors could be divided into 3 main categories which included interlingual errors, intralingual errors and miscellaneous errors. These broad categories were further classified into 14 sub-categories. Literal translation, sociolinguistic influence, confusion over verbs of movement, language switch and mistake were
considered interlingual errors. The intralingual errors were wrong selection of a word or a phrase, overuse of superordinate terms, overelaboration, wrong use of colloquial words or slang, semantic confusion, phonological or graphological confusion, tautology, paraphrasing or word coinage and lapses. The miscellaneous errors referred to those that could not be categorised as either interlingual or intralingual errors. The analysis revealed that the greatest difficulty faced by learners was in finding the correct word or lexis to express what they intend to convey. Tan further analysed the different types of errors made by subjects with different levels of proficiency in English.

She concluded that intralingual errors outnumbered interlingual errors. Intralingual errors that resulted from the difficulties found within the target language itself made up the majority of the errors. This was perhaps due to the different learning strategies that the Malay learners employed to overcome their difficulties in expanding their vocabulary. Tan also discovered that most of the intralingual errors seemed to come from the data of the elementary learners.

A similar classification of learners’ errors was used by Mi Yang (1996) who carried out a lexical study on Korean students studying English as a foreign language. Her data came from compositions written by 65 Korean students. She classified the lexical errors into 3 broad categories which were interlingual errors, intralingual errors and miscellaneous errors. Interlingual errors were further divided into 2 subcategories namely, literal translation and the use of Korean words. Intralingual errors were also divided into another 9 subtypes. They were wrong choice of a word or phrase, overuse of superordinate terms, confusion of
binary terms, use of colloquial words or slang, phonological or graphological similarity, circumlocation or paraphrase, tautology, verbosity and lapses. Her data revealed similar results to Tan's (1994) study that intralingual errors outnumbered interlingual and miscellaneous errors.

Raja Zarina (1997) did an error analysis study on both grammatical and lexical errors produced by 80 first year, Malay students majoring in English studying in the International Islamic University. Her data comprised written compositions of her subjects. In her research, she found that 36% of the errors made by her subjects was attributable to lexical errors. Her study also indicated overgeneralization of lexical structure of the target language as one of the contributory factors to the occurrence of errors. She also discovered that inherent difficulty of the target language had resulted in unacceptable use of phrasal verbs as well as incorrect selection of words. Confusion over orthographical and semantic similarities and word-formation errors had been named to be responsible for the incorrect choice of lexical items.

The studies mentioned above, in general, were conducted by means of error analysis. The lexical errors were also categorised following the formal: semantic distinction.
2.8 Conclusion

The literature reviewed in this chapter reveals that error analysis is a more reliable tool to analyse learners’ errors compared to contrastive analysis. This is due to its ability to identify errors resulting from mother tongue interference and difficulties arising within the second language itself. Besides, error analysis also “enables us to classify and explain errors and take steps to correct them” (Choi 1996: 88). The present study, therefore, is conducted by means of error analysis.

The researcher has decided to adapt Corder’s (1971) procedures for an error analysis study – identification of errors, classification of errors and explanation of errors. The reason for this is because the researcher feels that in order to analyse learners’ errors, the errors need to be identified first. As these errors are of a different nature, they need to be grouped or classified into different categories depending on their erroneous nature or characteristics. Once they are classified, explanation of the different types can later be carried out effectively. Other researchers like Tan (1994) and Mi Yang (1996) have also adapted Corder’s (1971) procedures of error analysis study.

In order to classify the lexical errors in this study, the researcher has followed the error classification proposed by James (1998) that is the formal : semantic distinction. The lexical errors are also categorised according to the subtypes proposed by researchers like Seow (1984), Teh (1989), Tan (1994), Mi Yang (1996) James (1998) and a few of the researcher’s own.
The present research also seeks to identify the plausible causes of lexical errors. The researcher intends to identify the types of errors which originate from interference of mother tongue (interlingual errors) as well as the kinds of lexical errors which result from the linguistic difficulties inherent in the second language (intralingual errors).