

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.0 Introduction**

This chapter presents a description of the subjects, the research tool and the method of analysis of this study. The procedure of analysing the data is also discussed in this chapter.

#### **3.1 Subjects**

The subjects comprise fifty Form Five Malay students of an urban school namely, SMK Buyong Adil, Tapah, Perak. All the subjects are between 16 to 17 years of age and have been learning English formally for eleven years at various local government schools. Their highest academic qualification to date is the Penilaian Menengah Rendah ( PMR ) examination which they sat for in Form Three.

The 50 subjects are chosen from the best 4 classes out of a total of 6 classes of Form Five in the school. Due to time constraints, the researcher cannot include all the Malay Form Five students in this study, thus only 50 subjects out of a total of 132 students have been chosen. The reason for selecting the more proficient students is because it has been suggested that analysis of errors produced by such

learners show “what types of error tend to persist and which therefore demand skillful avoiding action or remedial treatment” ( Lee 1965 : 64 ).

From a questionnaire ( Appendix F ) distributed to obtain some background information about the subjects, it was discovered that the parents of the majority of the students earned between RM 801- RM 1600 monthly. This would mean that the students are from the working class. Almost all the students solely use their mother tongue with their family members. The subjects also stated that they seldom use English in their interaction with their friends. They use English only during their English lesson in school.

### **3.2 Research Tool**

The research tool for this study is the compositions written by the subjects. The purpose of the writing task is to obtain data on the lexical errors. The subjects are required to write a composition of about 350 words from a choice of two topics. The topics are as follows :

1. Write a story ending with ,

“....it was the most frightening experience of my life.”

2. Describe your first day of school.

The topics are chosen because they are narrative and descriptive in nature. Such topics, the researcher believes, allow more room for expressions of action and emotion. So, there is more opportunity for the subjects to make use of a wide range of vocabulary items. Besides that, the topics are non-factual. Thus, subjects are not required to possess some level of prerequisite knowledge of certain matters.

### **3.3 Administration of Research Tool**

All the subjects were first asked to complete the prepared questionnaire. A total of 50 questionnaires were collected. Each of the subjects was asked to write a composition of 350 words on one of the given topics. The writing task was administered at one sitting in the subjects' respective classrooms. The duration of time allocated was approximately 80 minutes which is equivalent to a normal double period in the school time-table. Altogether 50 written compositions were collected. Both the questionnaires and the written compositions were later analysed.

### **3.4 Method of Data Analysis**

The lexical errors in this study will be explained by means of error analysis. The researcher has adapted the procedure of error analysis proposed by ( Corder 1971) in order to analyse the lexical errors found in the data. The steps include :

#### 3.4.1 Identification of Errors

#### 3.4.2 Classification of Errors

#### 3.4.3 Explanation of Errors

#### 3.4.1 Identification of Errors

This is the first stage of error analysis. In this stage, the lexical error is first identified by the researcher. An error can be defined as any form of construction that is deviant in any way from what is considered to be acceptable for standard written academic English ( Angeli 1989 ).

The identification of lexical errors can be done by making a comparison between the way a native speaker and the learner relays a message. If the learner's lexical choice deviates from that of the native speaker's, then, that sentence can be regarded as erroneous. In this study, only erroneous lexical items are counted. The lexical errors that will be examined in this study are as follows:

- i. *lexical items which deviate in form*

These are errors which involve words that are incorrectly formed. For example :

\*I want to be a success businessman. [ successful ]



In this example, the inappropriate form of lexical item is used. Instead of using the adjective “successful”, the learner has used the noun “success”, thus, committing a lexical error.

ii. lexical items which deviate in meaning

These are lexical errors which involve words that are semantically incorrect in the given context. For example, the use of “opposite” instead of “different”.

\* We must not look down on people of *opposite* race. [ different ]

In this example, the word ‘opposite’ is incorrectly used. The correct word should be “different” to convey the meaning of different races.

### 3.4.2 Classification of Errors

In this study, the researcher has adapted the error taxonomies put forward by James ( 1998 ) and a few error types proposed by Seow ( 1984 ), Teh ( 1989 ), Tan ( 1994 ), Mi Yang ( 1996 ), Raja Zarina ( 1997 ) and the researcher herself. The erroneous lexical items in the present study are classified into 2 broad categories according to the sources of the errors. They are :

## A. Intralingual Errors

Intralingual errors are errors resulting from the difficulties arising within the target language itself. They are the result of what Richards ( 1971 : 206 ) calls overgeneralisation, ignorance of rule restrictions, incomplete application of rules and false concepts hypothesised.

There are 7 subtypes of errors under this classification. The subtypes that are put forward by James ( 1998 ) are *confusion of sense relations*, *distortions*, *confusibles* and *collocation errors*. The other subtypes are *redundancy* ( Teh 1989 ) and *lapses* as proposed by Tan (1994). Another subtype is *word class conversion errors* and this is the researcher's own. The intralingual errors are explained as follows:

### 1. Confusion of Sense Relations

This error type is suggested by James ( 1998 : 151 ). Individual words, although they have meanings in, their own right, cannot exist independently. It is through sense relations or semantic relations with other words that their meanings are better defined and comprehended. Sense relation can be defined as "the place which a word or a phrase ( a lexeme) holds in the system of relationships with other words in the vocabulary of a language" ( Richards, Schmidt, Kendricks and Kim 2002 : 479 ). For example, the words "bachelor" and "married" have

the sense relationship of “bachelor = never married” ( Richards, Schmidt, Kendricks and Kim 2002 : 480 ).

The most obvious sense relations are those of ‘sameness’ or synonyms or assumed synonyms. Synonym refers to “a word which has the same meaning or nearly the same meaning as another word” such as “hide” and “conceal” ( Richards, Schmidt, Kendricks and Kim 2002 : 533 ). Assumed synonyms refer “pairs of words that are semantically related but can be differentiated” for example, “border” and “frontier” ( James 1998 : 152 ).

Other sense relations are hyponym and superonym. In semantics, hyponym refers to “a relationship between two words, in which one of the words includes the meaning of the other word” for instance, “scarlet” is a hyponym of “red” ( Richards, Schmidt, Kendricks and Kim 2002 : 243 ). Superonym, or also known as superordinate term, on the other hand, refers to “a word of a more general meaning than hyponym” ( James 1998 : 151 ), for example “animal” is a superonym of “cat”. An error arising from a confusion of sense relations occur in the following conditions:

- a. An error involving synonym refers to the use of a lexical item which is synonymous to the correct word but inappropriate in the given context. For example :

\*My family went for a journey to New Zealand last December.

[ trip ]

The word “trip” refers to an excursion especially for pleasure whilst “journey” refers to the act of going from one place to another. So, in this example, “trip” is a more appropriate lexical item in the given context as it implies the idea of traveling for pleasure or going on a vacation.

- b. An error involving assumed synonym refers to the use of a lexical item which is semantically related but can be differentiated. For example:

\* The chieftain made the decision to exterminate the dialects.

[eradicate ]

The word “eradicate” means “to destroy completely” while “exterminate” means “to destroy utterly, especially living things”. Thus, in this example, “eradicate” is more appropriate because “dialects” are non-living entity.

- c. An error involving hyponym refers to the use of too specific lexical item in place of a more general one For example :

\*I received a missive from my headmaster. [ letter ]

The word “missive” according to The Oxford English Reference Dictionary ( 1995 : 924 ) refers to “a letter from a sovereign to a dean and chapter nominating a person to be elected bishop” while the word “letter” simply means “a written , typed or printed communication sent by post or messenger”. So, in this example, the word “letter” is more suitable because “my headmaster” is not a sovereign.

- d. An error involving superonym refers to the use of a more general term where a more specific one is required. For example :

\*The rose has a pleasant smell [ scent ]

The word “smell” refers to the “faculty of perceiving odour or scents”. The word “scent” means “a distinctive especially pleasant smell”. Therefore, in this example “scent” is a more appropriate lexical item because it describes the sweet fragrance of the rose.

## **2. Distortions**

These are forms which are non-existent in the second language. The erroneous lexical items are created as a result of the learner having

wrongly spelt the words. These lexical errors are due to the misapplication of these operations namely; omission, overinclusion, miselection and misordering of a letter or letters ( James 1998 : 150 ). Errors considered as distortions are explained as follows:

i) Omission of a letter or letters

This refers to a condition when the subjects leave out a letter or letters from the correct spelling of the lexical items. The omitted letter or letters can either be vowels or consonants. For example:

- a. \* We watched a very intresting movie last night. [ interesting ]

This is considered a distortion because the letter 'e' has been omitted from the word "interesting".

- b. \*The comitte had agreed to have the jumble sale next Sunday.  
[ committee ]

This is considered a distortion because the letters 'm' and 'e' have been left out from the word "committee".

ii) Overinclusion of a letter or letters

This refers to incorrectly spelt words due to the inclusion of an additional letter or letters in a particular word. For instance:

- a. \* The teacher's explaination is not clear. [ explanation ]

This is considered a distortion because the letter 'i' has been added to the correct spelling of "explanation".

- b. \* There is an assembeley held every Monday in the hall. [ assembly ]

This is considered a distortion because two extra letters 'e' are added to the word "assembly".

iii) Misselection of a letter or letters

This refers to wrong selection of a letter or letters in the spelling of lexical items. For instance:

- a. \* The meal is very delitouse. [ delicious ]

This is considered a distortion because the wrong letters have been used to spell the word "delicious".

- b. \* The baby craid because he was bitten by a scorpion. [ cried ]

This is considered a distortion because the wrong letters have been used to spell the word “cried”

iv) Misordering of a letter or letters

This refers to a spelling error which involves the misordering of a letter or letters. For examples:

- a. \* “ I want the red balloon,” said the littel boy. [ little ]

This is considered a distortion because the letters ‘e’ and ‘l’ have been wrongly placed in the word “little”.

- b. \* Good freinds are hard to get. [ friends ]

This is considered a distortion because the letters ‘e’ and ‘i’ have been wrongly placed in the word “friends”.

### 3. Confusibles

Confusibles refer to pairs or triples of words that sound and look similar ( James 1998 : 145 ). Unlike distortions, confusibles are correctly spelt lexical items which exist in the second language and have meanings in their own right. These lexical items cause confusion as the words share



some similar features in their forms. The similarities can be categorised into four main types and are explained as follows:

i) Vowel-based

This involves pairs of words that look similar. The perceived similarity between the pairs of words somehow causes the learner to make use of the wrong vowels for the intended word. This leads to erroneous lexical items for that particular context. For example, the confusion of “seats” with “sets” and “manual” with “menial” as in the following sentences:

a. \* There are a few empty sets in the hall. [ seats ]

b. \* The computer menial is too complex to be understood. [ manual ]

ii) Consonant-based

This involves the pairs of words which look and sound the same. Due to the perceived similarity between the consonants of the pairs of words, the learner has chosen the wrong consonant for the intended word resulting in the incorrect lexical word in the given context. For instance, “price” with “prize” and “grows” with “glows” as illustrated in the following sentences.

a. \* Kasim won first price in the competition. [ prize ]

- b. \*The poster grows in the dark. [ glows ]

iii) Prefix-based

This refers to errors involving pairs of words that share a similar prefix or initial-part. These lexical words are confusing to the learners because of the shared prefixes. For example, in sentence ( a ) the learner has wrongly used the word “council” instead of “counsel” because both words have the same prefix <coun<. In sentence ( b ) the learner has incorrectly chosen the word “discrete” instead of “discreet” as these words share similar prefix <dis<.

- a. \*He is often asked to council young people with problems.  
[ counsel ]
- b. \* Though he knew many of their secrets he was always discrete.  
[ discreet ]

iv) Suffix-based

This refers to errors involving pairs of words which have the same suffix or end-part. These lexical words are confusing to the learners because of the shared suffixes. For instance, in sentence ( a ) the learner has mistakenly used the word “compress” instead of the word

“supress” as the words “compress” and “suppress” have similar suffix <press>. In sentence ( b ) the incorrect word “effect” is used in place of the correct word, “affect” as these words share the same suffix <fect>.

a. \* I tried very hard to compress a yawn during the talk [ suppress ]

b. \* Deforestation can effect global temperature. [ affect ]

#### 4. Word Class Conversion Errors

Word class conversion errors refer to instances when incorrect forms of words are used because of confusion with the forms of the parts of speech. This differs from confusibles. In English, lexical items can be divided into different parts of speech or word class such as nouns, adjectives, adverbs and verbs. Learners make this kind of error when they use the incorrect part of speech for example, the use of a noun “success” instead of a verb “succeeded” as in

a. \*I studied hard for my examination and success to get excellent results.[ succeeded ]

Word class conversion error is also the result of the wrongly selected form of the part of speech, for example the use of the wrong adjective

in the following sentence, where the learner uses the adjective “frustrated” instead of “frustrating”.

- b. \*That was the most frustrated day of my life. [ frustrating ]

## 5. Redundancy

This deviant form represents a needless use of different words or phrases to say the same thing within the same statement. The repetition of the same idea has contributed to awkward and erroneous structures. For examples:

- a. \*Yet, however television has its advantages.

This is considered an error of redundancy because the word “however” is redundant. The idea of contrast is already conveyed by “yet”.

- b. \* Takada is a Japanese people.

An error of redundancy is found in sentence ( b ) because the word “people” is redundant. The word “Japanese” already implies that the person is a Japanese.

## 6. Collocation

In linguistics, collocation is defined as “the juxtaposition or association of a particular word with another particular word or words” ( The Concise Oxford Dictionary 1995 : 259 ). This combination of words must be ‘used’ together to form a meaning. Learners make this error when they use a different word-combination as in the following examples.

- a. \* I ordered a plate of fish and meat for lunch. [ fish and chips ]

In the above sentence “fish and meat” is considered an error of collocation because the wrong word-combination has been used. “fish” and “meat” do not collocate. Instead “fish and chips” should have been used as it refers to a type of dish which consists of fish fillets and fries.

- b. \* It is complete moon tonight. [ full moon ]

“complete moon” in the above sentence is considered an error of collocation because the wrong word-combination has been used. The combination of “complete moon” is not acceptable in the English language. The correct collocation is “full moon” which refers to the time when the whole moon illuminates.

## 7. Lapses

This refers to erroneous expressions which include omissions of lexical items. Lapses occur when learners leave empty spaces within their sentences for lexical items that they are not sure of. For instance :

- a. \*My family went for a            in Singapore last month. [ vacation ]
- b. \* Everyone has            in this world. [ rights ]

The above sentences contain lapses and are considered erroneous because the lexical items “vacation” and “right” are missing.

## B. Interlingual Errors

Interlingual errors are errors due to the interference from the mother tongue, in this case, the Malay language. These include errors which are committed due to calque or literal translation from the mother tongue and the use of lexical items from the native language.

There are 4 subtypes of interlingual errors, namely *calque*, *code-switching*, *confusion over verbs of movement* and *loan words*. The subtype calque is

adapted from James (1998), code-switching from Dulay, Burt & Krashen ( 1982 ), whereas confusion over verbs of movement is proposed by ( Tan 1994 ). Another subtype, loan words is the researcher's own classification.

## 1. Calque

The term 'calque' refers to literal translation from the mother tongue ( James 1998 : 151 ) . The learners opt to make a word-for-word translation because they fail to produce the intended lexical items in the target language. In this study, Malay learners employ this strategy as they assume that both English and Malay lexical items share similar meanings. For example:

a.\*The teacher angry me. [ scold ]

This is an error of calque because the adjective "angry" has been used instead of the verb "scold". This is due to the influence of the Malay language lexical item, "marah", which can mean both "angry" and "scold".

b. \* Don't forget to eat your medicine [ take ]

This is an error of calque because the word “eat” has been literally translated from the native language, “makan” meaning “eat”. In the Malay language one can say

*Jangan lupa makan ubat*

which when literally translated becomes,

\*Don’t forget to eat your medicine.

As a result, the learner has used “eat” instead of “take”.

## **2. Code switching**

Code switching “involves the rapid and momentary shifting from one language to another” ( Dulay, Burt & Krashen 1982 : 114 ). In this case learners use words from their mother tongue perhaps because they are not able to think of the English equivalent. For instance:

- a. \* Mother asked me to buy some kunyit. [ turmeric ]

This is an error as a result of code switching because a Malay word “kunyit” has been used instead of “turmeric”.



- b. \*Once a week, the pos bergerak comes to my village. [ mobile post office ]

This is an error because a Malay phrase “pos bergerak” has been used instead of the English equivalent.

### 3. Confusion Over Verbs of Movement

This is due to the misuse of lexical items that are related to directions. In English language, there are different words to mean different directions such as “come” which suggests the idea of moving or being brought towards; “go” means to start moving from a place to another. Second language learners, however, are of the opinion that both words imply the same point of direction, thus they use these words interchangeably. For example :

- a. \*My parents went home and I warned my brother to keep quiet.  
[ came ]
- b. \*I want to come home. [ go ]

Errors due to confusion over verbs of movement occur because the word “went” and “came” have been wrongly used. This is probably due to the interference of the mother tongue. In Malay, the word “balik” can be used for all directions of movement. The sentences

( a ) and ( b ) above if translated to Malay are perfectly acceptable, as illustrated below :

- a. *Ibubapa saya balik ke rumah dan saya memberi amaran kepada adik saya supaya senyap.*

Translation : My parents came home and I warned my sister to keep quite.

- b. *Saya hendak balik ke rumah.*

Translation : I want to go home.

Hence, the learners have used “come” and “go” interchangeably.

#### 4. Loan Words

Errors of this nature only concern English expressions which include Malay lexical items which have been loaned from the English language. This differs from code switching which involves the use of any Malay lexical items. Learners make errors of this kind probably because they are not aware of the English equivalent of the words. For examples:

- a.\* The clinic is located at Seksyen 10 / F. [ Section ]

This is considered an error due to loan words because the Malay equivalent of the loaned lexical item "section" has been used in the second language production.

b.\* A fight took place at the bus stesen yesterday.[ station ]

The use of "stesen" in sentence ( b ) is erroneous because the Malay equivalent of the loaned lexical item "station" has been used instead.

### **3.4.3 Explanation of Errors**

This is the most important stage because the explanation of errors is the ultimate objective of error analysis ( Corder, 1981 ). At this phase, the researcher will attempt to explain how errors are produced and to identify the possible sources of errors.

## **3.5 Conclusion**

In this research, the researcher has adapted the procedure of error analysis proposed by Corder ( 1974 ) to facilitate the analysis of data. Analysis of the lexical errors identified in the data will be conducted in the following order : identification of errors, classification of errors and explanation of errors. The

lexical errors are classified using the error categories proposed by James ( 1998 ) , Seow ( 1984 ), Teh ( 1989 ), Tan ( 1994 ) and the researcher herself. The lexical errors will be classified based on their possible sources, namely intralingual and interlingual errors.