CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This section will discuss the literature that forms the theoretical basis of the study. It will look at research carried out in the areas of interrogatives, intralingual and interlingual factors in language learning, language transfer, interlanguage, overgeneralization of target language, environmental and social factors in language learning and fossilization of language.

2.1 Studies On Interrogatives

This section will look at the studies that have been carried out with regard to forming questions and will establish some patterns on how students/children form questions.

Most of the interrogatives studies were carried out with the aim of comparing how young children acquire L1 (Singh, 1989). However, there are studies in which the development of ‘wh’ questions of L2 learners were conducted such as by Ravem (in Richards, 1974)
between L1 Japanese/L2 English and by Carden et. al. (1975) between L1 Spanish/L2 English (in Dulay and Burt, 1978). The findings of these studies were then compared with those of L2 "wh" question-development reported by Klima and Bellugi (1966). From an analysis of these errors it was concluded that there were striking similarities between L1 and L2 "wh" question development. It was noticed that the learners acquired auxiliaries earlier than the rules of inversion and 'do' insertion. These findings were also confirmed by the study carried by Felix (1976) for L1 English/L2 German.

Dulay et. Al. (1982) reports that in the acquisition of "wh" questions in English, learners first use "wh" words before the rest of the statement form of the utterance, which is left unchanged, for example,

*What the boy doing?

At the next stage, the learners use the early auxiliaries, such as; 'is', 'are' and 'was' (which they have acquired early in the acquisition stage of the language), along with the statement form of the utterance. But the auxiliaries are still not systematically inverted with the subject as shown below;

*What they are talking about?, instead of
What are they talking about?

In the third stage, the learners use the late auxiliaries, (auxiliaries acquired in the later stages of language acquisition) such as 'do', and 'are', but the auxiliaries are inverted (1) at times, and at other times left uninverted (2), as illustrated below:

(1) What are they doing? (inverted)

(2) *What she did? (uninverted) instead of

What did she do?

In the fourth stage, the late auxiliaries such as 'am' and 'has been' are acquired and these are inverted with subjects as in;

(1) What am I doing? (inverted)

(2) Has he been teaching here for more than 10 years?

(inverted)

(Celce-Murcia and Larson-Freeman, 1983).

English yes-no questions and embedded questions were also examined by researchers. Studies by Gillis and Weber (1976) in Dulay and Burt (1978) for L1 Japanese/L2 English and Klima and Bellugi (1966) for L2/English, show that yes-no questions first appear
uninverted and without 'do' periphrasis that is omission of 'do' before a subject for example;

* What you do? Instead of the correct form:

What do you do?

The latter is acquired after the acquisition of auxiliaries. As for English embedded questions, syntactic errors were seen in the word order for example;

* I know what is it, Instead of,

I know what it is.

Such errors were attributed to over-application of rules (Gelce-Murcia and Larson-Freeman, 1983).

Wode (1983) however, reports that the new data from his four children with L1 German acquiring English naturalistically, indicates that the above finding does not hold for every combination in which English is acquired as L2 and that the degree of parallelism varies, as a function of the structure of the L1 acquired previously.

Menyuk (1986) in Dulay et al., (1982) says that the approach by Gillis and Weber (1976) and Klima and Bellugi (1966) are not flexible
enough as they do not allow overlap between stages of development for child-individual variation within the development and sequence. Wode (1983) contends that when children move, or have moved, from one stage to another, they do not immediately stop producing utterance characteristic of the earlier stages. The amount of overlap will depend on the situation or task a child is confronted with, as evidenced by his study.

Wode’s findings suggest that either language transfer or other factors to do with the learners’ more advance cognitive development could account for the differences between L1 and L2 acquisition of interrogatives. Alternatively, they would be the result of both.

The review of literature above, shows that much research has been done on interrogatives in particular between L2 English and other languages.

2.2 The Importance Of Grammar In English Learning

Grammar focuses on the structure of sentences. The New Collins Dictionary and Thesaurus (1992) explains that grammar is a branch of linguistics that deals with syntax and morpheme, sometimes also phonology and semantic.
The researcher shares the same view with the above, but wish to add that grammar is usually not concern with whether a question or sentence is based on truth or otherwise. Hence, a question or sentence can be grammatically correct but illogical.

As Gleason (1955) says, a sentence not only has a pronunciation and a grammatical structure, but it also has a "meaning". Part of what is commonly called "meaning" can be defined by observing situations in which the sentence is used.

Chomsky (1957) claims that language is a property of mind, that is, a rule governed activity, and that an individual is born with innate grammar and the capacity to actualize it. Although this hypothesis was originally developed to account for first language acquisition, it was revised to explain second language learning as well (Singh, 1989). The errors that L2 learners made are found to show systematic features of the language and other languages that children may know (Singh, 1989). It was deduced that these learners possessed fairly well autonomous grammar of the TL. Their performance is rule governed in the same way what the performance of native speakers' language is.
Hence as Nickel (1978) explains, the study of learners' errors was therefore motivated by the hypothesis that:

"... the learner is creating for himself an account of the structural properties of the Target Language, about its grammar... on the basis of his interaction with the data he is exposed to."

(Nickel, 1978: 48)

The hypothesis is that L2 learners are active and creative who, when exposed to the TL in especially "authentic situation" (Corder, 1981) will activate their innate capacity to learn a language. They will then actively engaged in formulation, testing and revising their hypothesis about the TL until the hypothesis resembles the rules of the TL grammar.

2.3 Interlanguage In Second Language Acquisition

Cheng (2001) says that interlanguage is a developmental by-product. As a language learner is in the process of learning new language, he/she produces a type of language of his own. Hence, interlanguage according to Richards (1985) in Kachru, (1990), is the type of language produced by second foreign learners who are in the process of learning. For example, when a Malaysian learns English, he/she will actually acquire English that is different from the target
language due to his/her socio-cultural background. In the Malaysian context, this new interlanguage has deviated into some form of Malaysian English.

Selinker (1972) makes the assumption that there is a latent psychological structure in the brain which is activated when one attempts to learn L2. The utterances of L2 learners' and native speakers' are different. Selinker hypothesized that there exists separate linguistic system based on the observable, out of which results from a learner's attempted production of a target language (TL).

Selinker calls this linguistic system 'interlanguage', it is an intermediate mixed system showing systematic features of both the TL and other languages a learner may know, such as his native language. An L1 Bahasa Melayu (BM)/L2 English learner may therefore be expected to produce an utterance such as,

* Have three houses in the village.

Where 'have' translates as 'ada/terdapat' in BM. The correct English version would be,

There are three houses in the village.
In contrast to Selinker's psycholinguistic notion of a learner's linguistic system and its variability, Nemser 1972 (in Richards, 1974) defines this system as an "approximative system" phase. It is one of the functional developments in a language contact situation. The emphasis is on the goal-directed development of this system towards the target language norm.

"An approximative system is the deviant linguistic system actually employed by the learner attempting to utilize the target language. Such approximative systems vary in proficiency level; variation is also introduced by learning experience... communication function, personal learning characteristic, etc."


Corder (1973), on the other hand, coined the term "transitional competence" to describe the learner's language. His notion of competence is borrowed from Chomsky and emphasizes that the learner possesses an innate grammar which underlines the utterances he makes. Like Selinker's and Nemser's concepts of learner's language, Corder describes the same phenomenon as one that has features of the Native Language (NL) and Target Language (TL) and some that is unique. Corder also refers to his system as an idiosyncratic dialect which,
“is regular, systematic, meaningful i.e. it has a grammar, and is, in principle, describes in terms of a set of rules, some sub-set of which is a sub-set of the target dialect.”

(Corder, 1981: 19)

Richards (1974) adds that besides a learner’s NL and TL, an L2 learner’s interlanguage is also influenced by the language learning setting where English is learned as a L2 and where the curriculum content of the school course is usually local. Under the setting, the generation of an interlanguage (IL) may become institutionalized at the level through socio-cultural adaptation of English to the local setting, and through overgeneralization and language transfer.

In Malaysian context, the inappropriate use of “isn’t it” and “is it” question-tags seems to be the result of the influence of Malaysian English for instance;

* You are teacher, isn’t it?

* You live in this village, is it?

According to Richards (1982: 158), these modifications and additions are distinctively the result of language transfer in which the linguistic features of a local language are transferred into another language, (Cheng, 2001). For instance, the English language in Malaysia is
greatly influenced by local languages and dialects of Malaysia such, as BM, Hokkien, Mandarin and Tamil.

Another example refers to possessive of a proper name of a noun denoting a trade, profession, or relationship which may be used to denote the belonging or ownership of a building or place of business (house, church, school, college etc.) as,

* She was educated at Raffle’s, instead of
  She was educated at Raffle’s College.

Nativization is a term used to describe language change. A language is said to have undergone “nativization”, a variety of English that is distinctively different from the other new varieties of English. Thus, because of its nativization, English in Malaysia is known as Malaysian English (Cheng, 2001).

Cheng (2001) says that, the nativization of English can take on different forms such as borrowing a local word that does not have an equivalent in English, and extending the meaning of a word beyond its lexical definition using localized particles. These processes of nativization may be caused by the transfer of local language or the mother tongue of a non-native speaker to English. This is indicated by

To some Malaysians, the inappropriate use of the possessive pronoun i.e. ‘mine’ followed by the insertion of ‘one’ (mine one), which translates to BM as ‘saya punya satu’, is influenced by the Malaysian English, for example:

* @ RHB mine one

RHB saya punya satu

(© Banking terms of business)

The other example where ‘one’ is being inserted in accordance with the Malaysian English is, as,

Oh sure, I must go one.

Oh dah tentu saya mesti pergi punya. (BM translation)

Just like ‘fossilization’, approximation is viewed as a negative term used to define a second or foreign language that falls short of being equivalent to its imported language. Cheng (2001) states that a language is said to have undergone nativization if it emerges as a variety that is different from its “parent imported” language.
According to skeptics, speakers of the new varieties of English are eager to learn and speak standard English (Cheng 2001). However, due to lack of exposure, insufficient instruction and the interference of their mother tongue, the type of English they speak is merely an approximation of the Standard English. Interlanguage is therefore seen as a common phenomena in language learning whereby it will have an effect on students' performance in the target language.

2.4 Intralingual and Interlingual Factors in Language Learning

Errors which can be explained in terms of the TL are intralingual errors. Such errors may occur due to a number of factors such as faulty overgeneralization, incomplete application of grammar rules, failure to learn conditions under which rules apply, for example;

1. * What does she wants? Instead of
   What does she want?

In utterance 1, the error in the utterance can be attributed to overgeneralization of the TL. Since the third person singular takes -s, -es, -ies, in the present tense, the learner overgeneralizes this rule by
using "wants" even though the auxiliary "does" is already carrying the present tense for a third person singular.

2. * Who win the game? Instead of

   Who won the game?

In question 2 above, the error can be attributed to incomplete application of grammar rules, where the learner uses 'win', a present tense, instead of past tense for a past action (won).

The errors are similar to those found in L1 learners’ language and reflect the developmental stages that learners' pass through. In wh interrogatives, such errors are characterised by omission of auxiliaries, lack of subject-verb inversion and inappropriate verb form (Singh, 1989).

An intralingual error occurs because of the creative nature of language learning. Dulay and Burt (1972) were the first to investigate the nature of "creative" constructive process. They studied the natural sequence in the acquisition of 8 grammatical structures, viz. the plural (-s), the progressive (-ing), the copula (is), the articles (a/the), the auxiliary (is), the irregular past (ate/took), the third person singular (-s) and the possessive (nouns) among Spanish-speaking children. The children in the study were Chicanos, Mexican and Puerto Ricans.
Dulay and Burt came to the conclusion that the acquisition sequence of all the above structures were approximately the same. They were of the view that the L2 system rather than the L1 system became the basis of the strategies adapted by the children in the acquisition of the second language.

Intralingual errors also arise because learners base their grammatical judgements on what they already know about the L2 system. Oiler and Streiff (1975) propose that there is a projection on the part of the language user, based on what he has already understood earlier. For example,

* Yesterday he go to town.

Semalam dia pergi ke pekan.

(literal translation to BM)

There may be mother tongue interference by literal translation. The learner does not see the need to use "went" for "go" because it is redundant within the semantic field of the sentence in his L1/Bahasa Melayu. If the learner does not attach any significance to tense markers in his English, he would tend to produce structures such as,

* He go to the town
This tendency is also seen in what Richards (1972) called 'overgeneralization' when the learner produces deviant forms based on his previous experience of the other structures in the language. Thus, errors in redundancy and interference are related and are not mutually exclusive (Nair, 1990).

Interlingual errors are actually deviations from standard English that could be caused by improper application of grammar. It could also be that a learner may have a certain rule in his L1 which he negatively translates to his TL.

Politzer and Ramirez (1973) studied the spoken English of a sample of 126 Mexican-American school children in a bilingual (English and Spanish) and monolingual (Spanish) school. The children were shown an 8-minute cartoon of Aesop's fable called "The Ant and the Dove". The sound was switched off. The children were asked to retell the story and answer some questions on it. The errors made were categorised as morphological, syntactical and lexical errors. Politzer and Ramirez found deviation of standard English which included the improper application of standard English rules.
The study confirmed not only the influence of the interference theory, but also suggests the sources of errors as interlingual developmental.

An example for consonant clusters in English are probable to Malay learners resulting in serious consequences in communication. Thus the Malay learner finds it difficult to distinguish between Six/Siks and Sick/Sik resulting in a structure such as,

* There are only sick people in my house.

'Sick' in the sentence would mean six people. Thus, the error lies in the continuum of the phonological interference in the written language because BM does not have the ks consonant cluster following the vowel /i/ (Lufti Abas, 1985). Yet it is also an interlingual error because of the confusion with the English (L2) 'Six' and 'Sick' caused by faulty pronunciation. The confusion between pronunciation and the written form therefore, causes both interlingual and intralingual problems.

Duskova (1969) studied the errors of 50 Czech post graduate learners (on grammar and lexis errors in compositions) and concluded that while language transfer plays a role in the learners’ learning
of English, a large number of errors were attributed to interlingual factors.

Therefore, it can be seen that interlingual and intralingual factors are influential in language learning.

2.5 Language Transfer in Language Learning

In line with the mentalistic view of language acquisition (Selinker 1972), language transfer has been recognised as a psycholinguistic procedure by means of which L2 learners activate their L1 knowledge in developing or using interlanguage.

The main problem that any study of L2 meets with is the fact that language transfer is not easily distinguished from the other components of the complex second language learning situation. In other words, there is yet no way of providing direct evidence that transfer has in fact taken place (Wong and Lim, 1983).

The sample sentences below show how a transfer takes place when the learners fossilize the native language (NL) into TL (English):
Jika awak tak sukakan saya, lebih baik awak jangan dating ke rumah saya lagi. Which translates to

* If you not like me, better do not come to my house any more.

In the sentence, the learner has omitted a ‘do’ verb after ‘you’.

According to Selinker (in Richard 1974), "fossilization may occur via language transfer – the effect of interlingual transfer from mother tongue."

Gass and Selinker (1983) are of the view that in order to understand the process of language transfer, we need to understand what is meant by language transfer. They then give an account of how linguistics and researchers view the transfer.

Corder (1983) questions the use of the term "transfer" because of its past association with a particular theory of language psychology i.e. the behaviourist theory. Corder prefers to speak of the role of the mother tongue. This allows a broader interpretation of native language influence than does the word ‘transfer’ as it is used in earlier conceptions.
In Corder's model, borrowing is a performance phenomenon. It does not constitute part of the learning process, but it is more appropriately associated with a communicative process. A learner in a given communicative situation may find himself/herself unable to express a certain concept and will hence "borrow" something from the native language or other languages known to the learner. Structural transfer in Corder's framework is basically a result of successful borrowing.

Adjemian (1981) in Gass and Selinker (1983), deals further with Corder's distinction between borrowing the etiology of an error which resembles a native language feature. He argues that in the case of lexical items, we do not have a case of borrowing if a particular feature of rules appears over an entire class of lexical items, since the learner in this case has internalized some rules which reflects hypothesis formation. However, with structural transfer, when the learner-grammar has been affected, there will not necessarily be an awareness of the fact that a native language rule or form has been used.

In stark contrast to the traditional view of language transfer, Schatter in Gass and Selinker (1983) bases his model of Hypothesis-Theory developed largely by Levine (1975). When learning a particular
structure of an L2, learners are guided by the types of hypotheses which they can make then. These hypotheses and domains are constrained by the learner's previous knowledge. This includes knowledge of native and other languages, also commulative in whatever is acquired of the TL becomes part of one's previous knowledge and it thus is available for further learning.

As a working definition, language transfer is the influence of the resulting similarities and differences between the TL and any other language that has been previously (and perhaps imperfectly) acquired. In essence, language transfer is a process of using native language (or other language) knowledge in the acquisition of a second (or additional) language.

2.5.1 Negative Transfer

According to Selinker (1983), negative language transfer is identified as a process which occurs whenever it is found to be statistically significance in the native language of one of two alternative linguistic entities which is then paralleled by which predominance in an analysis of the attempted production of a foreign language. He adds further that the dominant entity will be an error since it deviates from an
experimentally established norm of that foreign language (Selinker, 1983).

The sentences below show the negative transfer as a result of interference of L1 (BM) of L2 learners. It is common that the students produce these kinds of questions:

* What name your elder sister? instead of
  What is your elder sister's name?

* Where do you school? instead of
  Where are you schooling?

The omission of 'is' and 'are' in the above examples is possibly due to the absence of auxiliaries in BM, where the L1 structure happens to be the same as the L2 structure. Negative transfer thus has taken place producing improper L2/English interrogatives.

2.5.2 First Language Transfer

From the observation of many cases, the grammatical structures of the first language tend to be transferred to the target language. The students will also transfer the sentence forms, modification devices, the number, gender, and case patterns of his first language.
First language transfer occurs subtly so that the learner is not even aware of it unless it is called to his attention in specific instances. Even then he will underestimate the strength of these transferred habits which may be as difficult to change when transferred as when they operate in the first language.

The grammatical structures of a language have form and meaning. A good example is the plural inflection in English with 's" as its form and "more than one" as its meaning. Every structure has distribution, that is, it occurs in certain situations or environments and does not occur in others. In English, the "s" plural occurs in noun heads as in 'books', 'telephones', etc, but it does not occur in modifiers of noun heads as 'good' in 'good books', or 'telephone' in 'telephone books', etc. In other languages, a plural inflection does occur in modifiers of nouns as well as nouns. Therefore, in transferring a native language structure, the learner transfers its distribution as well as the form and meaning (Lado, 1957).

According to Corder, (1983), the part played by the mother tongue is a good deal more pervasive and subtle than has been traditionally believed. It plays a part at the start of being in the process of learning, and in the use of the target language in communication. He says, that the mother tongue comes in as a heuristic tool in the
discovery of the formal properties of the new language, facilitating especially the learning of those features which resemble the mother tongue. By heuristic tool, Corder means that the first language helps or allows a second language learner to discover and learn the second language for himself (Yong, 2001).

The researcher shares the same view with Corder's (1983) model of "borrowing" of something from native language or other languages. English, like any other languages, does not stand by itself and thus takes on many different forms such as borrowing local words that do not have an equivalent in English, and extending the meaning of a word its lexical definition using localized particle such as, 'gotong-royong'* and 'lalang*'. This is illustrated in the examples given:

*1. Since we do not have enough fund to build the mosque, we will do it on "gotong-royong" spirit.

*2. You must always be strong and firm. Do not be weak like a lallang.

In Example 1, "gotong-royong" is a kind of volunteer work carried out by many people in the spirit of co-operation, or in "togetherness".

In Example 2, "lalang" is a plant with green blades and stalk, about 2 to 3 feet high. Because of its tiny stalk, it is easily blown up by
the wind. Therefore, the hint is to a weak person who is easily influenced by something, or a person without a firm stand in his life.

In a "Study of stipulative terms in conventional Malaysian English", Ng (2001) says that:

"nativization may be caused by the transfer of local languages or the mother tongue of a non-native speakers to English. This is indicated by several researchers such as Lowenberg (1992). Baskaran (1988), Platt (1984), Kachru (1984) and Richards (1982) mentioned that the English that is used in the sociolinguistic context of Malaysia has long diverted from standard English, since there is a "relative absence" of its native speakers. Besides this, there is constant contact with the local languages of Malaysian.

(Ng, 2001: 84-85)

In addition, Baskaran (1988) says that in Malaysia for instance, the variety now known more commonly as Malaysian English has, among various factors, the local languages as one of the ingredients that colour the variety (three local languages basically Malay, Chinese and Tamil).

These modifications and additions are distinctively the result of language transfer which the linguistic features of the local languages are transferred into another language in terms of phonology, syntax,
and lexicon. Thus because of nativization, the permanent additions or modifications to language, the English in Malaysia is known as Malaysian English, a variety of English that is distinctively different from the other new varieties of English (Ng, 2001).

### 2.6 Overgeneralization Of Target Language (TL)

Overgeneralization of the rules of the Target Language (TL) is evidenced among Malay L1/BM and L2 English students of the schools of this study who overgeneralize the TL. This can be illustrated by the following examples:

1. * What did she wrote? instead of
   What did she write?

2. * Does Diana reads newspaper? instead of
   Does Diana read newspaper?

In question 1, the overgeneralization of the TL grammar rules is evidenced when the student uses 'wrote' even though the auxiliary verb 'did' is already carrying the past tense. Similarly, since the Third Person Singular takes -s, -es or -ies in the present tense (example No. 2), the learner overgeneralizes using 'reads' even though the
auxiliary 'does' is already carrying the present tense. In questions, auxiliary verbs and not the main verb carry the tenses.

Selinker (in Richards 1974) explains that a particular error may be a result of language transfer or transfer of training or a combination of both. Hence, it is not surprising that this hypothesis has been subjected to much criticism. Selinker too, (in Richards, 1974) suggests that fossilization may occur via any one or a combination of the following processes:

1. Language transfer – the effect of interlingual transfer from mother tongue
2. Transfer of training – the effect of teaching procedure.
3. Strategies of L2 learning – the effect of approaches used by the teacher on the material to be learned.
4. Strategies of L2 communication with a speaker of the TL – the effect of learners' strategies when communicating with a native speaker.
5. Overgeneralization of target linguistic material – the effect of learner's overgeneralization of a rule of linguistic features.

Kirby (1984) quotes that Selinker's five central processes mentioned above have been critisized as being expressed in such
global terms that they can be easily applied to a variety of learning problems:

"They don't clarify what is peculiar to learning a language considered in terms of illustrative examples, the strategies of L2 acquisition, overgeneralization and strategies of communication show no differences. The result in every case is the same simplification."

(Kirby, 1984: 66-67)

Singh (1989) says that, Selinker (1974) refined the processes of overgeneralization and strategies of L2 learning to account for interlanguage and developmental errors by proposing that such errors may result from overgeneralization, ignorance or rule restriction, incomplete application of rules and false concepts hypothesized.

The issue over simplification or redundancy and overgeneralization causes conflict of ideas among analysts. Selinker and Richard (1974) contrast each other when Selinker considers simplification and redundancy as a strategy of learning, while Richards (1974) associates it with overgeneralization. Richards covers instances where the learner creates deviant structures in the TL. For example, having learnt that the third person singular takes -s in the present tense, a learner may overgeneralize and use it in interrogatives as well, such as:
"May/can she goes?"

Richards (1974) also is of the opinion that the learner, by apology with his past experience of subject-verb-object constructions may feel that a question is not complete if he does not add the object pronoun.

In addition learners who have not acquired the ‘do’ periphrasis may come out with questions like below or something to this effect:

* Why your little sister was cried yesterday? instead of Why did your little sister cry yesterday?

In the above question, ‘do’ verb should be used as there is no auxiliary verb or copula BE present. The ‘do’ verb should carry the tense.

Taylor (1975) conducted a study on the use of overgeneralization and language transfer learning strategy by Spanish elementary and intermediate university students learning English as their L2. His findings confirm the weakness of transfer-based theory of error as a large number of the errors that the learners in both groups made were due to interlingual factors, the major source being
overgeneralization error. The study also reveals that errors indicating a reliance on L1 structure are more common among beginners than the intermediate learners. Taylor therefore concludes that in learning L2, adult learners begin relying on their ability to analogise, systematize and regularise the TL data they are exposed to but because of their lack of familiarity with the linguistic system, they also rely on their L1 for support. However, with increased proficiency in the TL, they rely proportionately less frequently on their increasing knowledge of the TL.

Selinker, Swain and Dumas (1975) in Hakuta (1986) conducted a study of native English-speaking seven-year old children in French immersion programme in Toronto. Their study revealed a number of transfer errors which could be ascribed to English structures. The findings suggested that in classrooms where their peers were all native speakers of English, the children were in a unique sociolinguistic situation where transfer errors from English were perhaps more acceptable then they would be in a situation with native French speakers.

As such, it can be seen that overgeneralization of the target language could be one of the main factors contributing to the difficulty faced by subjects of this study in forming questions.
2.7 Environmental And Sociological Factor In Language Learning

As we consider a normal child to be genetically programmed to learn a language (Chomsky 1969: Lenneberg, 1967), there are further conditions that have to be fulfilled before language learning can take place (Berstein, 1964). The child's environment must be adequately equipped with resources for his language development. For example, studies on feral children have shown that these children who have virtually not been exposed to language, are not able to develop their linguistic capabilities fully even after they have been exposed to the language at the early phase of adulthood. Pines (1981), Mc Carthy in Lawton D. (1968), Skehen, P. (1989), Lightbourn and Spade (1993) and Ellis (1993) agree that social and individual variables such as parents' attitude and learners' attitude, motivation, personality and family environment are important factors for language development.

Naturally students who are well exposed to English reading material, who listen to radio and watch English TV programmes etc. are expected to be high achievers in the language.

In Malaysia, there are three main English newspapers. They are, The New Straits Time, The Star and The Malay Mail. In addition, there are many radio networks using English as their main language,
such as, Mix FM, Hits FM, Blue Network etc. There are also English TV programmes and news broadcast in English. Therefore, students indeed have enough exposure to English for them to sufficiently acquire the language.

Norhazian Mat Sapien (1999) in "Syntactic Variation in English Assignment Written by Trainee Teacher", says that, Platt and Weber (1980: 155) identify the functions of English in Malaysia’s family domain as the following:

English is widely used in urban communities where the families/parents are English medium educated. These urban communities can be found in K.L., Penang, Malacca and Johore Bahru. K.L. is the capital city of Malaysia and it was the British Administration centre, while Penang and Malacca were Straits Settlement with a history of direct colonial rule. Johore Bahru has close contact with Singapore due to its locality.

(Platt and Weber, 1980: 155)

Platt and Weber (1980: 154) state that English in Malaysia was instrumentally a high variety, which symbolizes higher status and income. But today, this situation is changing. English is regarded as a language with no great relevance to the non-educated in English Malaysian since they are able to obtain higher status position in life without using English.
In comparison to BM in SPM examination, students have a different attitude towards it, as they have to pass the paper with a credit to enable them to pursue further studies in local institutions of higher learning. In addition, a pass in BM is compulsory for candidates applying government jobs and in order to be confirmed in their positions.

2.8 Teacher's Role in Language Learning

Research reveals that linguistic interaction between teacher and student is a 'source of input' to language learners. Krashen (1982) in commenting on the teacher's language position, says that even in modern times where aids are available, it is the teacher's language which remains the principle model for the students. The researcher, who is also involved with classroom activities, is in the opinion that 2/3 of the classroom talk is the teachers' and the teachers ask the students the most number of questions.

Therefore, teacher's language and the type of questions he/she asks will have a bearing on his/her learners' performance. A teacher who asks only wh questions most of the time, might find that his/her learners are not proficient with yes-no or some other types of questions. There are also other aspects that might effect learners' ability such as teaching technique. For example, a teacher might
mistrach some aspect of the grammar pertaining to forming question and thus produce grammatically incorrect questions in class that students would modal such as,

(1) * Can you told us about your family?
(2) * Do you went to school yesterday?

Question 1, the error is when the learner uses a past tense for the main verb i.e. 'told' after the subject 'you'. Since the auxiliary verb carries the tense, the main verb should be 'tell'.

In question 2, the error is when the learner uses an auxiliary verb 'do' in the present tense taking asking for a past action. In the question, an auxiliary verb to indicate a past action i.e. 'did' is to be used as the question word, and the verb that follow should be in the present tense i.e. 'go'.

As Taylor (1975: 75) points out "The irregularities in English itself is additional to the learning difficulties of L2." What more, Halliday (in Kress, 1976) identifies 36 different tenses combination. Therefore, full knowledge of the verbal system will not be easy for non-native learners of English to acquire.
In addition, Shaughnessy (1971) stresses that "irregularities of verbs and the fine distinction made possible through the tense system pose difficulties for even native speakers of standard English."

Nevertheless formal instruction does not reflect the developmental route that learners take. However, classroom teaching can enhance acquisition as it provides the right "intake environments" as pointed out by Krashen (1982):

"...the nature of second language classroom learning lies not only in the grammar instruction but in the 'teacher-talk', the comprehensible to achieve at least the intermediate levels rapidly, as long as the focus of the class is on providing input for acquisition."

(Krashen, 1982: 112)

Therefore, the teacher's role and thus classroom input is important in providing the right feedback for students to acquire a language.

2.9 Fossilization Of Language

Ng (2001) in the "Study of Stipulative Term In Conventional Malaysian English", says that, the term 'fossilization' expresses a static
condition in language. According to Selinker (1972 in Kachru, 1990: 9), 'fossilization refers to:

..... a subsystem which speakers of a particular NL (Native Language) will tend to keep in their IL (Interlanguage), relative to a particular TL.

For some researchers and theorists, the new varieties of English are considered “deficient” forms of English that cannot emerge to become standard varieties because there are just too many “interferences” as the result of fossilization of a language Selinker (1972 in Kachru, 1990: 9). Hence, fossilization is viewed as a negative process since it hampers a learner’s opportunity to learn a particular L2 in its “purest” sense. (Ng, 2001).

Lack of competence of L2/English causes L1/BM learner to fossilize his or her “origin” as Hakuta (1986) suggests that some of the conditions of fossilization may be linguistic in origin while others may have to do with the characteristic of an individual learner, such as the importance of a learner’s emphasis on the correctness of speech. Yet others may have to do with the social context.
Therefore, it is common to see L1/BM individual learner, when facing difficulty in forming questions would produce grammatically incorrect interrogatives based on his/her L1 translated version such as;

(1) * What do you *used* to kill the robber?

Apa awak telah gunakan untuk membunuh perompak itu?

(2) * How did you *killed* the robber?

Bagaimana awak telah membunuh perompak itu?

The learner uses ‘what’ (question 1), instead of ‘how’ in the ‘wh’ interrogative as a result of the influence of his mother tongue (BM), when he fossilizes the BM features, “what do you used”, which translates into BM as;

Apa awak telah gunakan?

Another error is when the learner uses past tense i.e. ‘used’ instead of present tense ‘use’. However, if a appropriate question word i.e. ‘how’ is used, the presence of ‘used’ is not necessary.

The error in question 2 is when the learner uses the wrong tense for the main verb i.e. ‘killed’ instead of present tense ‘kill’. The correct form is as follows:
How did you kill the robber?

Singh (1989) in "A study on the causes of errors in the use of interrogatives among Malay learners of English" considers "fossilization" to be due to the transfer of training. As he points out:

"fossilization of linguistic items due to transfer of training can be seen in terms of the language that the teacher and student plays as source of input to language. Krashen (1982) in commenting on the teacher's language posits that even with modern aids available, it is the teacher's language which remains the principle model for the students.

(Singh, 1989: 23)

Selinker's concept of latent psychological structure in the brain is based on Lennberg's (1967) (in Richards, 1974), that it is the biological counterpart to universal Grammar and it is transformed by the infant into the realized structure of a particular grammar according to certain maturational stage. He also assumes that successful L2 learners who have achieved native speaker competence have reactivated the latent psychological structure.

Within this theoretical construct Selinker further assumes the operation of a phenomenon called fossilization. According to Selinker,
"Fossilization in linguistic phenomena are linguistic items, rules and subsystem which speakers of a particular native language will tend to keep in their interlanguage relative to a particular target language, no matter what the age of explanation and instruction he receives in the target language."

(Richards, 1974: 36)

These fossilizable structures have the potential of "back-sliding" systematically from a TL norm towards an interlanguage norm in the speech of an L2 learner. Selinker (in Richards, 1974) believes that a learner falls back on fossilized features when he encounters problems in producing certain required forms in the TL. A teacher who has failed to acquire the use of 'do' periphrasis in interrogatives, for instance, may resort to the use of fossilized forms such as the auxiliary 'be' and may produce erroneous wh questions such as,

* How is you do?
* Where are you go on Fridays?
* Are you know her?

Selinker (in Richards, 1974) also hypothesizes that the processes of fossilization can sometimes be so generalized, it may lead to the freezing of a learner's interlanguage plateau beyond which the learner either cannot or will not progress. The sentence below is an example:
* Can I want go to toilet?

The learner fossilizes the L1/BM structure into L2/English by inserting 'want' which translates as,

Boleh tak saya mahu pergi ke tandas? (Bahasa Melayu)
Can I want go to toilet?

George (1972) uses the term "redundancy reduction" to explain why L2 learners often take the interrogative pronoun to be sufficient indication that a question is being asked, for example,

* What you looking for? instead of
What are you looking for?

In the above example, 'are' is omitted (reduction) after 'what'.

Further to that, Pasgaskor (1989) adds that learners who produce or use this strategy (redundancy reduction) can therefore be expected to come out with the following utterance;

1. * Sir, what you writing? instead of
   Sir, what are you writing?

2. * Madam, are you teacher? instead of
   Madam, are you a teacher?
In question (1), a verb to-be 'are' is omitted (reduction) after 'what'. In question (2), an article 'a' is omitted after the subject 'you'.

2.10 Conclusion

Therefore, literature has shown that various factors are involved in acquiring a second language and that there are various stages in the development of language learning. Forming questions is a stage in language development and this study will look at how the subjects of this study form questions and at the factors that hinder their ability in doing so. The corpus is based on the 1,600 answers to a test which comprises of 20 types of questions given to the 80 students of the Arabic school.

This being a pioneer study on English interrogatives formed by Arabic school students, it is hoped to shed some light on the difficulties faced by students in learning the English language in general and in particular forming interrogatives in English.