CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Malaysians today are immensely exposed to the English language primarily via the education system and media. In Malaysia, English has the status of second language, and the language contact is practically unavoidable for all Malaysians. Before Malaysian children are formally exposed to the language in schools, most of them have already picked up some basic words and expressions.

Teaching English as a second or foreign language is always a battling ground for educators, more so for a country like Malaysia which is multiethnic and multilingual. In Malaysia, most people speak their mother tongue as their first language, followed by the national language, Malay. For example, a Malaysian Indian may have Tamil as his first language, Malay as his second language followed by English as his third. However, this may not be a common pattern among all Malaysians. Among the urbanites, there may be a preference to use English as their first language instead of their native language. Thus, the native language and the national language will be relegated to either second or third language. Malaysians' use of the English language is very much diversified across social background, educational background, and ethnicity among others. However, for the Malay community, a large population claims English as their second language after their mother tongue.

In the Malaysian education system, English is taught as a second language in all schools until the end of secondary education. Despite a minimum of 11 years of learning English, Wee et al. still claim, that 'learners' proficiency level is still below acceptable level and many have not yet mastered the basic grammatical rules' (2010:16). One of

the reasons for this unsatisfactory level of proficiency is the teaching method employed in schools that gives little emphasis if any on grammar teaching (Wee et al., 2010; Wee, 2009; Saadiyah Darus & Khor, 2009). The Malaysian English syllabus gives 'greater importance to communicative competence rather than grammatical competence' (Wee, 2009:350). Therefore, due to the focus on communication at the expense of grammar teaching, learners of English in Malaysia are still struggling to be competent users of the language.

This failure may be attributed to the environment in which the language acquisition takes place. In the case of Malay students, most of them tend to use their native language when communicating with family members and friends in both their home and school environment. In Malaysia, the Malay language is commonly used to converse with both Malays and non-Malays as it is the national language. Hence, English is rarely used outside the language classroom, resulting in an overall weak performance in the language. This problem is most apparent when it comes to writing, which is the most complex and intricate skill to master. It is rare to find essays with few grammatical errors; specifically in the use of 'verb tenses, SVA, and word order' (Wee, 2009:350).

The difficulty lies between native speakers who think in the English language and non-native speakers who think in their own native language. Due to this gap, the non-native speakers would generally need to think about grammar rules while the native speakers supposedly have these rules automatized. Therefore, non native speakers are more prone to making mistakes and committing errors. As Ellis and Barkhuizen (2009:62) point out:

> If L2 forms have not yet been automatized, they require controlled processing which places a heavy demand on learners' information- processing systems. The result is learners will resort to the use of non-standard forms that have been acquired earlier and are automatized.

The 'level of automaticity and fluency increases while cognitive involvement decreases, so much so that, as Johnson, Wang and Zhang describe, learners often lose the ability to describe verbally how they do the task' (2003, as cited in Dornyei, 2009:155). To reach this stage requires a large amount of practice, and DeKeyser (2007) warns us that even highly automatized behaviours are not 100 percent error-free. When rules are 'highly automatized, it requires fewer attentional resources, which means that a large portion of rules are performed on auto-pilot' (Dornyei, 2009:155).

There is no doubt that most if not all second language learners of English are already well versed in their mother tongue before they start learning English. For example, only a small percentage of Malaysian urban second language learners are more comfortable conversing in English due to the environment and upbringing. There is therefore, intrusion of some norms of native language in English, the second language. Weinriech (1953:1) writes that:

> Interference is those instances of deviation from the norms of either language which occur in the speech of bilinguals as a result of their familiarity with more than one language'. He further adds that 'it is the conclusion of common experience if not yet a finding of psycholinguistic research, that the language which has been acquired first, or the mother tongue, is in a privilege position to resist interference.

The controversy of first language interference has had a long life not only among second language teachers and researchers, but also among linguists in issues pertaining to language change and language contact. It is believed that interference plays an influential role in second language acquisition. Interference or 'crosslinguistic influence' (Kellerman, 1995) is a two-fold process involving: i) positive transfer, and ii) negative transfer. If a target language structure corresponds to another in the learner's second language, it may facilitate the acquisition of the newly presented structure. This is referred to as positive transfer. However, if there is no structural correspondence

between the second language and mother tongue, negative transfer or first language interference may intercede in the acquisition of the target language.

Within the second language acquisition perspective, two ways of looking at these problems are through contrastive and error analysis. These two forms of analysis will be further discussed in Chapter 2.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Malay, as a member of the Austronesian family of language is structurally and morphologically different from English, an Indo-European language from Germanic family.   The Malay language indicates a rather large scale of borrowed words from Sanskrit, Arabic and more recently, English. However, these influences are limited to lexical not grammatical. Learning English, a genetically different language as to Malay could present an array of difficulties to Malay students. This is because English is learnt later in life when students have already a set or more of earlier language habits.

As Corder (1967:163) claims:

> The differences between the learning of the two languages are obvious: that the learning of the mother tongue is inevitable, whereas there is no such inevitability about the learning of a second language; that the learning of the mother tongue is part of the whole maturational process of the child while learning a second language normally begins only after the maturational process is largely complete; that the infant starts with no overt language behaviour, while in the case of second language learner such behaviour, of course, exists; that the motivation for learning a first language is quite different from that of learning a second language.

In simpler words, learning of the mother tongue is viewed as a necessary and natural process of a child's mental and social development which takes place in his cultural environment. He experiences linguistic immersion everyday. The acquisition of the

mother tongue is unplanned and ongoing. The child will learn the language through imitation, association and trial and error. The motivation level is undoubtedly high; otherwise his daily needs may not be met.

Contrarily, learning a second language may not involve the same favourable environment and psychological factors as learning a first language. Learners of English language in Malaysia have to follow a rigid school syllabus which is highly exam oriented. The motivation level may differ as his motivation level may not be on the same level as that for his first language. Very often too the learner would abandon and forget what he has learned or acquired once he is out of the school environment.

Second language learners also possess a set of habits. These habits may facilitate or hinder a new learning task. Rutherford (1987:7) suggests that the 'learner has to adapt to a new channel of thinking and a new system of speech which will differ from the one he has already known'.

According to Fries (1945):

> The basic problems arise not out of any essential difficulty in the features of the new languages themselves but primarily out of the special set created by the first language habits. The learner of the second language has to develop a new set of language habits against a background of different native habits (as cited in Lado, 1957)

Faced with these constraints, a second language may never be learned the same way the first language was acquired (Cook, 2008). If he learns it through formal instruction, it is inevitable that he learns its grammar. As Widdowson (1988, as cited in Frodesen, 2001: 234) words it, '… for language learning is essentially grammar learning and it is a mistake to assume otherwise.'

However, Widdowson also points out that this does not mean restricting attention to its formal properties but rather to use it as a device to mediate between words and contexts

in order to ensure meaning is achieved (1988, as cited in Frodsen, 2001: 234). Learning grammar is unavoidable in order to understand the structure of the second language and to express oneself correctly. Widdowson further suggests that instead of just reciting memorised phrases, language users should have the ability to vary one's speech pattern according to situations. Grammatical forms is not taught with the sole purpose of asking the learner to regurgitate its rules, but to be applied correctly to aid comprehension and expression in the language. In short, grammar knowledge facilitates speaking, reading and writing. Grammar is not one end in itself but means to an end.

Palmer (1965:1) states that learning a language is learning how to operate the verbal forms of that language, adding that in any language 'the part that concerns the verb is the most difficult'. According to Crystal (1991: 371-372), 'verb(al) is a term used to refer to a class traditionally defined as 'doing' or 'action' words'. The formal definition of a verb refers to an element which can display morphological contrasts of tense, aspect, voice, mood, person and number. Functionally, it is the element which is used as the minimal predicate of a sentence, co-occurring with a subject.

The English language requires morphological changes in the verb form to indicate the time location of an act or situation at least in the main clause, the past from of a verb to indicate a past situation or act, a present form to indicate a present situation or act and likewise a future form to indicate a future act or situation. In a present form, a verb must carry a grammatical marking to agree with its subject. However, the case differs in the past from where the verb retains its past form irrespective of the number or person of its subject.

The English verbal system which is characterised by a number of features, non-existent in the Malay verbal system could present learning difficulties to Malay learners. According to Judge and Healey, 'the English verbal system which is made up of tense,

aspect, mood and voice is one of the most difficult areas to master, as both the concepts and terminologies involved are confusing' (1983:90).

Malay, on the other hand, is a tense-less language, where a verb indicates no time location of an act or situation; neither does it require any morphological marking to indicate its agreement with the subject. The idea of time is expressed through the use of aspectual auxiliaries and adverbial phrases.

As illustrations, let us look at the following sentences:

i.   *Saya telah membaca buku itu.*

ii. *Saya membaca buku itu semalam.*

iii. *Saya akan membaca buku itu.*

To denote the past, sentence (i.) uses the aspect word '*telah*' while in (ii.) the adverb '*semalam*' is used. In (iii.) The aspect verb '*akan*' indicates the future. The form of the verb '*baca*' is invariable as it is used in all instances.

Although, the accession of the Malay verb forms is simpler than the English verb forms, this does not mean they are not complex in their own ways. The complexities of the Malay verbs lie in the affixes. These affixes do not express time and aspect the way English tenses do. Faced with these differences, very often, Malay learners find it challenging to use the English verbal system correctly. Besides having to master the inflections of the English verbs, students have to grasp the concept of tense which encodes time and aspect.

Aspectual distinctions indicate if the situation is fixed or changing, does it last for a moment or has a duration, or if it has been completed or on-going. Time is a universal concept that involves the past, present and future. However, it is a non-linguistic concept. In English, time and tense are considered as problematic areas. Both elements

are independent of each other in the sense that past tense does not necessarily express past time; likewise present tense can be used to express future time. For example, *The concert starts in 10 minutes.*

A comparative analysis of the English and Malay verbal system which includes the tense, aspect and mood of both languages is hoped to help the teacher anticipate problems that students might encounter while learning English verbs and also the difficulties they may face when applying what they have learnt. However, many linguists and past researches have stressed that the problems and difficulties highlighted by contrastive analysis may not always be plausible (Wardhaugh,1970; Richards, 1974; William, 2005). The disparity between the target language and mother tongue may or may not be a source of difficulty and neither would the similarities between the two languages facilitate acquisition of the second language. An error analysis of students work would help to identify the source of errors. This study focuses on the verb tense errors that Malay learners make when writing English compositions.

1.2 Objectives of the Study

Primarily the research is an attempt to bring to surface the various mechanisms in the English and Malay verbal systems to express a situation or action. From there a contrast will be made to identify the similarities and differences in the mechanisms. The results of the dissimilarity based on the contrastive analysis theory of the two verbal systems will then be tested in the actual language use among the Malay learners of English. This therefore, will also mean that apart from an attempt to bring out practical pedagogy suggestions, the study will also test the strength of prediction of facilitation and difficulty in language learning based on contrastive analysis theory.

Error analysis involves the observation of errors by a second language learner. This is a diagnostic tool which informs the teacher the effectiveness of his teaching procedures and materials. It will also reveal the mechanisms that come into play as the learner tries to learn the language. Contrastive analysis is presumed to allow the prediction of errors brought about either by partial analogy or by a difference between the mother tongue and the second language. These two methods are in fact complementary and are used by many constructivists to obtain better results.

1.3 Research Questions

This research work on the verbal systems of English and Malay is carried out based on the studies carried out by specialists in the field of general and applied linguistics. It has been undertaken with three research questions in mind:

I.   What are the similarities and differences between the English and Malay verbal systems?

II. What are the common errors made by Malay learners of English when using the English tense system in writing?

III. What are some possible sources of errors?

1.4 Significance of the Study

My interest in this field has grown out of the apparent controversy and confusion over the factors underlying the difficulties encountered by Malay learners of English. After having taught English to Malay learners for two years, I find that most Malay learners are unable to grasp the English verbal system, with particular reference to the use of the

tenses. Therefore, the interest in the verbal system of these two languages is not only typological but also pedagogically oriented. Language teachers as myself frequently complain about students' inability to communicate properly in English due to the insufficient knowledge of the target language's verbal system, which is the core component in the study of this language. Hence, this study hopes to give a better understanding on how to help students use the correct verb form.

1.5 Research Methodology

In this study, two complementary approaches are employed, contrastive analysis and error analysis. First a contrastive analysis is conducted to by describing the Malay expressions of time and the English verbal system. This is then followed by an error analysis concentrating on verb tense errors by Malay learners of English in their compositions.

1.5.1 The Structural Model

In contrastive analysis, selected linguistic features of two or more languages are compared with the aim of finding out the similarities and dissimilarities between them. Lado gives a general guideline of the procedures for comparing language structure:

> We begin with an analysis of the target language and compare its structure with the mother tongue. For each structure, we need to know if there is a structure in the native language 1) signalled the same way, that is, by the same formal device, 2) having the same meaning, and 3) similarly distributed in the system of that language. (1957:66)

Each structure should be compared and analysed for form, meaning and distribution in pairs. S. N. Sridhar in his article 'Contrastive analysis, Error analysis and Interlanguage' says that the main principle in CA methodology is that the structure of both languages

needs to be analysed using the same theoretical model. 'The prerequisite for any contrastive study is the availability of accurate and explicit description of the language under comparison. It is also essential that the descriptions be theoretically compatible' (as cited in Fisiak, 1981:214).

EA and CA studies should not be presented in isolation as two propositions, but they should complement each other. As James elucidates '… each approach has its vital role to play in accounting for L2 learning problems. They should be viewed as complementing each other rather than as competitors for some procedural pride of place' (1980: 187).

1.6 Limitations of the study

This study is constrained in its scope as it seeks to investigate the errors made in the English tense system found in 20 compositions. This study does not take into account other language errors such as word order and spelling.

The sample of the study is limited too as it involves 20 Malay learners of average proficiency from a selected training centre. As the sample is confined only to average proficiency Malay learners, it does not reflect the entire Malay population. However, it may be possible to generalise the findings because of homogeneity with regard to their mother tongue and their level of education as all subjects are of similar language background. A more detailed explanation of the sample will be included in Chapter 4.

There were some errors that could not be explained. As no interview was conducted with the subjects, it was impossible to know what some of them wished to say.

1.7 Definition of Terms and Relevant Concepts

In this research, the concepts used are as follows:

a. CA – Contrastive Analysis is a procedure whereby the descriptions of the learner's mother tongue or first language and second language are obtained and an interlingual comparison is then carried out.

b. EA- Error Analysis refers to the techniques used to measure the student's progress in learning the English verbal system through study and classification of the errors they make.

c. L1/ first language/ native language/ mother tongue/ source language- these terms refer to the Malay language.

d. L2/ second language/ target language – these terms refer to the English language, a language that the subjects of this research are learning as a second language.

e. SLA – the learning of English Language

f. Acquisition – Some linguists like Krashen may contrast the terms 'acquisition' and 'learning'. However, for the purpose of this paper, both terms are used interchangeably.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Historically, English and Malay have come in contact right from the eighteenth century when Francis Light established the first British settlement in the Malay Archipelago in Penang, an off shore island in the northern part of Malay Peninsula, in 1786. In the early nineteenth century, 1819, Stamford Raffles founded another settlement in Singapore. An island at the southern tip of the peninsula, and a few years later, in 1824, the British formally took over Malacca, formerly a Malay sultanate, approximately half way between Penang in the north and Singapore in the south, from the Dutch. These Straits Settlements, as they were known, were directly under the British rule (Scott-Ross, 1971:76).

The arrival of the British also marked the arrival of their language, English, which was used for administration purposes. As the British expanded their sphere over the other states of the Malaya Peninsula, the influence and the use of the English language increased hand in hand.

Malay and English, though being used side by side especially in matters related to state administration throughout the centuries, are languages distinctly apart ruled by their own respective grammatical structures. From the pedagogical perspective, do these differences impose certain restrictions in the teaching and learning process, taking for instance, a native Malay speaker learning English as a second language? A contrastivist readily hypothesises that differences between L1 and L2 do impose certain restrictions in the learning process while similarities facilitates learning. Though the hypothesis is often questioned by many linguists, it still deserves our attention at least for the sake of linguistics.

2.1 Review of Related Literature

In the literature of L2 learning, two types of linguistics analyses can be used to examine learner's target language production. Contrastive analysis predicts the areas of potential difficulty that learner's may have due to the difference between the native language or L1 and the second language. Error analysis helps us learn more about the nature and characteristics of the learner's problems.

There is a limited amount of literature available on contrastive analysis or comparative studies between English and Malay or any of her sister languages such as Tagalog, Javanese, Cebuno, and Pangsinan. Even those available, most of them are small scale researches conducted as academic exercises.

In the literature available, unfortunately, many of them deal with phonology, perhaps because of the obvious contrast between English and Malay (Yap et al., 2010; Sharifah Zakiah Wan Hassan et al., 2009). All studies in the phonological contrast between both languages agree that there are great differences between the two which hinder a perfect acquisition of spoken English among Malay learners. These differences can be summarised in the findings of Yap et al. (2010) that Malay learners of English were found to assimilate the categories of vowel sounds that are nonexistent in the vowel representation in Malay.

In another study, Fatimah Adelina Sastrawidjaja (1989) found that Malay learners tend to maintain the Malay consonant-vowel- consonant sound system distribution in English words of initial double consonants; and in the double and triple final consonant clusters, the final consonant is always dropped out.

Another area that attracts second language researchers is the verb or verbal system of the two languages. Anugerah (1972) makes a number of interesting observations

regarding the verb formation in English and Malay. Anugerah discovers that although both English and Malay employ verbal and non-verbal roots, Malay has a wider choice including any word class or phrases as verbal roots, whereas in English the choice is confined to either nouns or adjectives only. Malay, has three derivational suffixes (-kan, -an, -i) to verbalise a non-verb root, to transitivise an intransitive and to indicate the various types of cases, while English applies technique of direct conversion to verbalise, transitivise, or further transitivise. Anugerah also observes that reduplication in Malay is productive, whereas in English it is frozen (*menjerit-jerit* vs. screamed and screamed; *menyedut-nyedut* vs. inhaled and inhaled).

As mentioned previously (see 1.1), Malay is a tense-less language while English is a tensed language. English requires the specification of time of a certain act or situation in at least the main clause of the utterance through a morphological change or grammatical marking (Wilkins et al., 1992), while in Malay this is achieved through an adverbial of time or simply by the context of the utterance. This has been confirmed by McCoy (1985) in her comparative studies involving Malay and English texts.

This difference requires a Malay learner of English to acquire a different system of marking of time or temporal reference of an act or situation, obviously a new linguistic skill for the learner. Lacking in such a skill or inappropriate acquisition of the skill will result in Malay learners not perceiving time as reflected in the tense system of English.

If tense causes difficulties to the Malay learners of English, the sequence of tenses confuses them even more. Drawing on the work of Haja Mohideen Mohamad Ali (1991: 56), who studied errors committed by a group of post-secondary students whose mother tongue was Malay reveals a very 'high occurrence of errors related to the sequence of tenses'. He attributes the occurrence of this type of errors to the

interference of the subjects' mother tongue, Malay, in which the sequence of tense is almost unknown.

In the same study, Haja Mohideen Mohamad Ali (1991:38) also discovers a high percentage of errors related to subject-verb concord which he traces to the mother tongue as the possible interference. The Malay language requires no such concordance or agreement.

In her study of the Aspects of Malaysian English Syntax, Loga Baskaran (1987) makes a number of findings which are significant in terms of the contrast between Malay and English:

Tense

Tense in Malaysian English is deictic whereas in British English tense is taken relative to some intervening reference point(s) which link the event time to the utterance time (242).

Tense is temporally gauged - temporal distance from the deictic centre is significant in Malaysian English whilst it is not so in British English (242).

Modal auxiliaries.

… the auxiliaries 'have/had' in Malaysian English have a different meaning of pastness to that of the British English. In British English, they are perfective in nature, while in Malaysian English it is recent or remote anteriority that is denoted by these auxiliaries, i.e. in British English they denote aspect, whilst in Malaysian English they denote merely deictic tense (233).

…'will' in British English as in indicating probability is not a feature in Malaysian English (261).

… 'should' occurs in Malaysian English only with the meaning of 'obligation' and 'necessity' . In British English, besides those two meanings, it also indicates 'probability', 'inference', 'quasi subjunctive' or 'counterfactual' (265)

The 'marginal modals' like 'dare' and 'need' are almost never used in Malaysian English (248).

Stative verb

… the Malaysian English tendency to use …stative verbs in progressive…

The interesting point to take note here is that there is a possibility that these differences in the Malaysian English occur as the result of the influence of the Malay language. Concepts such as anteriority, simultaneity and posteriority in Malay are expressed in terms of deictic or sequential time frame by the use of non-lexical verbs (e.g. anteriority: *sudah, telah, pernah*; simultaneity: *sedang, masih, tengah*; posteriority: *akan*) and these very same verbs are used to denote any backward or forward shifting of time (Loga Baskaran, 1987:235). In other words, time in Malay is seen in block sequence (Asmah Omar, 1992).

The reason behind the fewer number of modal verbs in Malaysian English and not functionally as diverse as in British English is, perhaps, the fact that in Malay, modal meanings are expressed in various other ways other than by the use of the modal verbs as explained above through the use of 'should'.

Loga Baskaran also sees the influence of Malay in the use of stative verbs in the form of progressive in Malaysian English because in Malay the non-lexical verbs *sedang*, *masih* and *tengah* which are used to indicate an act in progression are also used to denote a present state. This can be understood as an 'over application of a simple Malay rule in a more complex English situation' (1987: 287).

Studies of the differences and similarities between two specific languages for pedagogical purposes can be conducted at two stages: before the construction of a syllabus and after the construction of the syllabus. Contrastive analysis is often related to the former and error analysis to the latter.

Corder (1973: 149-150) comments that:

> Error analysis and contrastive analysis are related as the latter discovers the differences between the first and second languages and predicts that there will be learning problems; due to these problems the learner will make errors. Error analysis studies the nature of the errors committed and confirms or refutes the predictions of contrastive analysis.

2.2 Contrastive Analysis

Contrastive analysis is a branch of linguistics that was first formulated by Fries in 1945 and later developed by Lado in 1957. The ultimate aim of CA is to compare the structures of two or more languages to identify differences among them that may hinder the learning of the target language. Lado (1957:2) theorises that elements that are similar to a learner's native language will be simple for him to learn and those that are different will be difficult. Lado adds in Ellis (1985:23) that a teacher who has made a comparison of the second language he is to teach with the first language of his student will know better what the real learning problems are and is better prepared to teach the L2. Brown who is of the same mind as Lado, claims that:

> The principal barrier to the second language system is the interference of the first language system with the second language system, and that a scientific, structural analysis of the two languages in question would yield a taxonomy of linguistic contrast between them in which would enable the linguist to predict the difficulties a learner would encounter. (2000: 208)

In the view of linguists the likes of Lado (1957), errors were mainly, if not entirely the result of transfer of L1 'habits'.

According to Ellis and Barkhuizen:

> Habits entail 'over-learning' which ensures that learner responses are automatic. These already learned habits interfere with the learning of new habits as a result of proactive inhibition. Thus the challenge facing the learner and language teacher is to overcome the interference of L1 habits. (2009: 54)

However, this theory was challenged by Chomsky's work on behaviourism and also research on L1 acquisition, which showed that children did not seem to learn their mother tongue as a set of 'habits' but rather seemed to construct mental 'rules', which often bore no resemblance to those manifest in their caretakers' speech (Ellis, 2008: 42). This challenge created the stipulation for further empirical study of L2 acquisition.

Linguists such as James (1980), Richard and Sampson (1980), Littlewood (2002), Corder (1981), and Ellis and Barkhuizen (2009) applauded Lado's work as the foundation of CA which Johansson summarizes as follows: "the systematic comparison of two or more languages, with the aim of describing their similarities and differences" (2007:1). By identifying features of the L2 that differ from those of the L1, CA believes learners could be helped to form new habits of the L2 by practising them intensively.

There are two distinct branches of CA that have emerged: the pedagogical approach and the theoretical approach (Corder, 1981). Gass and Selinker elaborate:

> The former indicates that the emphasis is on the language teaching and by implication, language learning. Contrastive analyses are conducted with the ultimate goal of improving classroom materials. The theoretical approach, on the other hand, aims to gain a greater understanding of language. In fact, it is maintained that contrastive analysis is a sub-discipline of linguistics. Its goal, like the goal of linguistics, is to understand the nature of language (2001:72).

Lado (1957) himself and many other researchers acknowledge and support the earlier work of Fries citing the importance of the 'pedagogical approach to isolate and identify particular aspects of the native and target languages in hope to create more effective teaching materials' (as cited in Alsulmi, 2010: 11). Fries states that 'the most efficient materials in language teaching are those that are based upon a scientific description of the target language and carefully compared with the parallel description of the native language of the learner' (1945: 9). Fries firmly believes that learners of a common linguistic background will face similar problems in learning a particular foreign language.

In 1961, Lado makes another observation regarding the same subject stating that an L2 learner will have great difficulties hearing and pronouncing phonemes that are distinct in the L2 he is learning but constitute two variants of a phoneme in his L1. However, he will have less difficulty hearing and pronouncing a phoneme which is structurally equivalent to a phoneme in his L1. Lado also observes that when a learner's L1 has more phonemic distinction in a phonetic area, he will find little difficulty adjusting himself to the simple phonemic pattern of the L2. On the other hand when he goes from simpler phonemic system in his native language to a more complex one in L2, he will have difficulties.

The central notion in CA is the contrastive analysis hypothesis, i.e. similarities between L1 and L2 facilitate learning while differences impede learning. It must be noted that CA exists in two different versions; strong and weak. Both versions are equally related to the notion of L1 interference. In the strongest form, contrastive analysis hypothesis claimed that all L2 errors could be predicted by identifying the differences between the learners' native language and the target language. The job of a constructivist is to predict the areas that facilitate learning and the areas that may cause difficulties or error

prone areas in the process of acquiring a particular L2. The central notion has become the central philosophy for language planners in planning L2 courses.

Corder (1973: 229-233) however, in disagreeing with Lado's theory and observations which form the basis of the contrastive analysis hypothesis, claims, 'difficulty is a psycholinguistic matter while difference is linguistic'. The linguistic performance can be seen in terms of two distinctive perspectives: productive and receptive. While language learning difficulties can be seen as 'the difficulty of learning to use the language receptively and learning to use productively ...what may be difficult to use productively may present few difficulties to learn to use receptively'(ibid. p.230). Similarly, similarities between the languages can be deceptive. '…words which are semantically similar in two languages do not necessarily function syntactically in the same way' (ibid. p.232).

Wardhaugh (1970), who is doubtful in the capability of CA as Corder is, says that errors can be explained but not predicted. Empirical evidence available soon suggested that many errors were not the result of transfer as claimed by in its strongest form (Ellis, 2008). Thus, a weaker form of contrastive analysis hypothesis was then proposed by Wardaugh. According to the new form, 'only some errors were traceable to transfer, and CA could be used to explain rather than predict' (Ellis, 2008:360).

However, Dardjowidjojo (1974) in defence of CA states that 'CA never makes claims of being able to predict with one hundred percent accuracy, and in some cases there might be more than one probable error for a particular contrast. Nor does it stop at theoretical prediction without classroom valuation.' Another CA advocate Di Pietro (1971: 7), claims that some errors could be due to factors such as memory retention, instructional method, presentation of content and overgeneralisation.

Lado, Dadjowidjojo and Di Pietro among many other CA believers are trying to facilitate teachers in constructing an effective second language classroom for learners of a particular language background by predicting the difficulties they might encounter. These linguists hope to remove at least some impediments in smooth running of a second language course thus making it more effective and economic in terms of time and material consumption.

However, this notion is rebuked by Corder, Richards, Selinker, and Nemser who find more usefulness in the study of errors committed by learners. They believe that errors are unavoidable and should not be viewed as problems to be overcome, but instead as features that are used by the learners. Corder (1967) suggests that language teachers observe students' errors for a regular pattern, and if a learner were seen to progress through this pattern, his errors could be taken as evidence of success and achievement in learning. Corder's statement above has never been argued, but instead applauded even by those of the CA camp. In fact, they consider error analysis and contrastive analysis two different but equally important personalities with two different jobs at hand.

To summarise, CA which is based on the theory that similarities and differences between L1 and L2 facilitate and interfere respectively in L2 learning, attempts to provide language teachers with relevant data to enable them to plan suitable L2 courses for learners with similar language background.

2.3 Error Analysis

As a result of the doubt over the validity of CA's capability at predicting, some linguists have used learners' language to provide substantial contribution to provide for the construction of effective L2 courses. The studies of learners' language which falls under the same umbrella but labelled differently such as 'approximative system' (Nemser,

1971), interlanguage (Selinker, 1972) and 'idiosyncratic dialect' (Corder, 1971) focuses on errors by learners in their attempt to acquire L2. In contrast to the behaviourist approach adopted by CA, EA became closely associated with the nativist views of language. The nativist theories emphasise the mental processes that occur in the 'black' box of the mind when learning takes place (Ellis & Barkhuizen, 2009: 54)

Selinker (1972, as cited in Altunkol, 2005:25) elucidates that his interlanguage concept as a separate linguistic branch which results from a learner's attempted production of a target language norm. Interlanguage may be viewed as an adaptive strategy by which the learner tries to construct structural properties of the target language. This strategy uses simplification, reduction, overgeneralization, transfer and omissions among others (Sselinker, 1972). Learners do not progress from zero knowledge of the target language rule to perfect knowledge of the rule. By using the above devices, they progress through a series of interim of developmental stages on their way to L2 proficiency.

Corder (1967) elaborates that analysing errors are significant in three different ways. To the teacher, the analysis will inform him of the learner's progress and what is still lacking; to the researcher, they will provide evidence on how language is acquired and what strategies are used by the learner; and to the learner himself, it will reveal the means of his hypothesis formulation in terms of the nature of the language he is learning. Corder regards the latter as the most significant because each language is different in nature, which will effect the learner's hypothesising means.

Corder (1971) suggests three stages in analysing errors. The first is recognising learner's idiosyncrasy or the deviant system. Each sentence is to be regarded as idiosyncratic until proven otherwise. Idiosyncrasy can either be 'covertly idiosyncratic', that is, when the sentence is well formed but yet idiosyncratic, or

'overtly idiosyncratic' when the sentence appears superficially well formed in terms of the rules of the target language, nevertheless cannot be interpreted in context.

The second stage is accounting for the learner's idiosyncracy which is done by comparing the idiosyncratic sentences and the ones normally used by native speakers of the target language.

The final stage is explaining the errors with two main objectives in mind. First, to elaborate what and how the learner learns when he studies the L2 and, second, to exploit the knowledge gained from the error analysis to show the learner how to learn more effectively.

In accounting for and explaining errors, classification is always necessary. Throughout the literature of error analysis, the sources of errors can be generally grouped within two main domains: interlingual and intralingual (Richards & Sampson, 1980). Interlingual errors can be traced to L1 interference. Such errors are influenced by the native language which interferes with target language learning. Intralingual errors result from negative transfer of items within the target language itself. These errors may surface in the speech of all second language learners, irrespective of their mother tongue.

2.4 Interlingual Errors

For this section, interlingual errors will be discussed in terms of transfer theory. The role of transfer in SLA was acknowledged by Lado long ago:

> Individuals tend to transfer the forms and meanings and the distribution of forms and meanings of their native language and culture to the foreign language and culture- both productively… and receptively… (1957, as cited in Gass and Selinker 1992:1).

Selinker argued against excluding the role of mother tongue in L2 acquisition. In support for L1 influence, he stresses:

> You must not and cannot ignore the student's mother tongue. It constitutes his linguistic competence, or network, or frame of reference; it supplies him with a set of associations and a chaining of sounds and patterns that are different in many aspects from English (1971, as cited in Richards, 1973:25).

In learning an L2 there are two approaches involved: assimilative and separative. The former is when the' learner uses his knowledge of L1 as a reference structure in terms of which elements and relations in L2 are being assimilated', while the latter is characterised by the learner's attempt to keep the two languages as separate as possible (Jakobovits, 1970:209). The assimilative approach leans towards the behaviourist approach which regards L2 learning as essentially the learning of new sets of rules as substitute to the already acquired rules in L1 (Corder, 1973:132; Dulay and Burt, 1974). According to behaviourist accounts, errors were viewed as the result of negative L1 habits. Errors were predicted to be similar to those found in L1 acquisition because learners actively construct the grammar of an L2 as the progress (Ellis, 2008: 54).

Linguists have their own definition of the notion of transfer but almost all unanimously point to the same signification. Di Pietro (1971:6) says, 'the process of interpreting the particular grammar of one language in terms of another is called transfer'. Crystal elaborates transfer as 'a process of foreign language learning whereby learners carry over what they already know about their first language to their performance in their new language' (1980:362).

Stockwell and Bowen (1965: 9-10), Jakobovits (1970: 20-3) and James (1980: 145) look at transfer in terms of negative transfer or interference, positive transfer or facilitation and zero transfer. Negative transfer occurs when the already acquired L1 'habitual responses' are contrary to the responses required for the new skill in L2;

positive transfer occurs when the responses in both languages are similar while zero transfer when the responses have no relation in whatever way.

The amount of transfer depends very much on the similarity and dissimilarity between L1 and L2. In short, the greater the distance between the two languages the higher the possibility of negative transfer and the more similar they are, the higher the possibility of positive transfer.

Wee (2009) when studying interlingual influence and intralingual factors revealed that the English tense-aspect system and subject-verb-agreement were the most difficult areas to master for Malay students due to mother tongue influence and complexities with the English language itself.

In another study, Wee et al. (2010) discovered that Malay learners of English often made errors in the use of third person singular verb. Errors occur when they try to make the verb agree with a singular or plural subject by dropping the –s inflection from the third person singular verb or making the verb plural by adding the –s inflection respectively. This form gives a lot of trouble to Malay learners as there is no SVA form in the Malay language. Such errors do not normally occur among the Germans and Finns whose mother tongues are not much of a difference from English.

The notion of transfer which is basic in the CA hypothesis is also significant in EA. However, the notion plays two different roles. In CA it is useful in predicting difficulties that may occur in second language learning while in EA it is for the error analysing processes.

2.5 Intralingual Errors

Interference from the learners' native language is not the only source of errors. Ellis (2008) states, that some errors are more universal in nature. These errors mirror the need of the learner to make the task of learning and using the target language simpler. One frequently quoted example is the use of past tense suffix –ed for all verbs. Intralingual errors reflect the learning strategies that come into play when learning a second language. Richards (1971) classified these strategies into four categories (1) overgeneralisation; (2) ignorance of rule restriction; (3) incomplete application of rules; (4) false concepts hypothesised.

2.5.1 Overgenaralisation

Richards (1974) mentions that overgeneralisation generally involves the creation of one deviant structure in place of two regular structures. It may be the result of the learner reducing his linguistic burden.

In the quest of learning a second language through structured courses, very often the learner is exposed to limited vocabulary, limited structures, abridged texts and simplified grammar books (Jain, 1974: 197-198). Although the use of these materials are pedagogically sound and at times may be necessary, they may seed the roots of overgeneralisation and over simplification of certain grammar rules because in actual communication use, learners tend to put into practice these oversimplified rules to express themselves in a specific context. In reverse, the learner may attempt to minimise errors by subjecting himself to the rules he has learned, thus resulting in rigid utterances and inability to express meaning effectively. For example a Malay learner of English may, on the basis of his limited knowledge of past tense form, attach the '-ed'

morpheme on all past tense verbs. This may result in errors such as '*She cutted the fruits last night*' (Wee et al., 2010).

2.5.2 Ignorance of Rule Restriction

Overgeneralisation and the ignorance of rule restriction are very similar because learners fail to observe the limitations of the existing structures and apply these structures in inappropriate contexts. Ignorance of rule restriction occurs when a learner does not perceive the contrast in items which are contrasted in an L2 grammar. Richards (1971) maintains that this type of errors is due to redundancy reduction. This happens when learners omit grammatical features that do not contribute to the meaning of an utterance. In the case of English learners of Malay, this can be exemplified in the omission of –s in the third person singular. For example, '*She stay at home*' (Maros et al., 2007).

2.5.3 Incomplete Application of Rules

These errors reflect the degree of development of the rules required to produce acceptable utterances. These errors are the result of incomplete learning. Common errors in this category are omission of auxiliary verbs and declarative word order in question forms. For example, such structures may be produced by second language learners, '*You speak English?*' and '*Ali so happy*'. In most cases, learners will gain confidence and overcome such errors as more experience in the language is gained. However, there may be some persistent errors that are fossilised

2.5.4 False Concepts Hypothesised.

In addition to the above mentioned strategies, errors can also originate from false concepts hypothesised. These are developmental errors which derive from faulty comprehension of distinctions in the target language. One of the causes is poor gradation in teaching items. For instance, the auxiliary verb 'was' may be interpreted as a past tense marker, as in *'last night it was rained'*.

Ellis and Barkhuizen (2009) however caution researchers that one problem with such a list is that it is not always clear which strategy is responsible for a particular error. Some errors can be explained in terms of more than one strategy or could be due to both interlingual and intralingual factors.

2.6 Conclusion

In a nutshell, contrastive analysis and error analysis are two different approaches in applied linguistic that attempt to provide an effective course planning, and teaching and learning of a second language. CA approach is a *priori*, while EA is *posteriori*, but both have a common aim – to facilitate an effective second language learning.

The notion of transfer is essential in both approaches. For the constructivist it is essential in predicting the areas to be emphasised and sequenced in an L2 course planning, that is, to make transfer positive and to lessen the effect of interference. For the error analyst, the notion is essential in analysing errors in an attempt to acquire sufficient information as a basis for the future L2 course planning.

There are numerous ways to categorise errors, the ones discussed here are categorised into two domains, interlingual errors and intralingual errors. The former is explained in

terms of transfer-interference theory while the latter reflects learning strategies that are universal. There are four main strategies that a second language learner may use in the process of learning the L2.

CHAPTER 3

CONTRASTIVE ANALYSIS OF THE ENGLISH AND MALAY VERBAL SYSTEMS

This chapter concentrates on a description of the English and Malay verbal systems which includes the aspect, tense, and mood of both languages. Tense and aspect are two linguistic categories that are intimately related to time.

As mentioned, Malay, a tense-less language, expresses tense, aspect and mood through the use of auxiliary verbs. Auxiliary verbs are 'subordinates to the chief lexical verb in a verb phrase' (Crystal, 1992:35). Auxiliary verbs can be further divided into (i) aspectual verbs, and (ii) modal auxiliaries. Both types of auxiliary verbs will be discussed in detail below.

3.1 Aspect

'The relation of the occurrence of one verb to another is called aspect' (Pick, 2009:5). Aspect refers to how an action or event is to be viewed in respect to time rather than its actual location in time. The English language conveys aspect grammatically while the Malay language expresses it lexically. Grammatical aspect is expressed through morphological inflection, where verbs take different forms according to the situations they refer to. Lexical aspects refer to the use of temporal markers to mark durativity, iterativity and stativity of verbs.

In Malay, aspect is expressed through aspectual auxiliaries such as *akan* (will/ shall), *sedang* (still/ in the midst of), *sudah* (already/ finished), *belum* (not yet), *masih* (still), *pernah* and *telah* (has/ have). Besides using the aspectual auxiliaries to indicate time,

adverbs of time or expressions denoting time are also used. Aside from context, the Malay language makes use of these expressions of time to make meaning clear. Hence, time adjuncts in the Malay language have no influence whatsoever on the verbs unlike the English language.

Present:

Today	-	*Hari ini*
Now	-	*Sekarang*
Every day	-	*Setiap hari*

Every day, I take my dog for a walk.

Setiap hari saya membawa anjing saya berjalan.

Past:

Yesterday	-	*Semalam*
Last night	-	*Malam tadi*
Last week	-	*Minggu lepas*
The day before yesterday	-	*Kelmarin*

I visited my grandparents last week.

Saya telah melawat datuk dan nenek saya minggu lepas.

Future:

Tomorrow	-	*Esok*
Next week	-	*Minggu depan*
Later	-	*Nanti*
The day after tomorrow	-	*Lusa*

I will go to the post office tomorrow.

Saya akan pergi ke pejabat pos esok.

There are two forms of aspect in the English language, progressive and perfective. The perfective form is always followed by either a main verb attached with the suffix –ed or a past participle. The progressive aspect however is indicated by a main verb in the –ing form.

To illustrate:

I.   Mina is studying French.
     Mina sedang belajar bahasa Perancis.

II. Mina studied French last year.
     Mina sudah belajar bahasa Perancis tahun lepas.

III. Mina has studied French.
     Mina pernah belajar bahasa Perancis.

In (i), the verb 'is studying' and aspectual auxiliary '*sedang*' indicates the action is still in progress – Mira is studying at the time of speaking. This is an example of progressive aspect and the auxiliary 'is' is known as progressive auxiliary.

In (ii), the verb 'studied' and aspectual auxiliary '*sudah*' tells us that Mira studied French in the past and specifically last year. This is a simple past tense verb as it refers to a particular location in time- last year. '*Sudah*' is used to express a completed past action.

In (iii) also, the action took place in the past, but it is implied that it the action has taken place recently and it is still relevant at the time of speaking. The auxiliary 'has' is called perfective auxiliary and it encodes the perfective aspect. The Malay language makes no distinction for the perfective aspect. '*Pernah*' or '*telah*' is used to indicate the action has taken place in the past, however more contextual devices are need to indicate if the event took place recently or if it is still relevant.

Aspect is always linked to tense. In (i) and (iii), the aspectual auxiliaries are in the present tense, but they could also refer to the past tense.

	Perfective aspect	Progressive aspect
Present tense	Mina has studied French. *Mina pernah belajar bahasa Perancis.*	Mina is studying French. *Mina sedang belajar bahasa Perancis.*
Past tense	Mina had studied French. *Mina pernah belajar bahasa Perancis.*	Mina was studying French. *Mina sedang belajar bahasa Perancis.*

Aspect will always go hand in hand with tense, but not vice versa as exemplified in (i). From the examples above, we can notice that the Malay verbs retain their form - '*belajar*' in all instances irrespective of tense and aspect.

The progressive and perfective aspects in Malay are indicated by the use of aspectual auxiliaries. In English, auxiliary verbs which occur in different forms according to the demands of tense or of the preceding auxiliary are used. Thus, a CA would predict errors here, but the form of the errors cannot be anticipated (Wijayasuriya, 1979: 263).

3.2 Tense

Tense is a feature of a verb which describes 'the degree of detachment of the speaker of the sentence from its occurrence, whether past, present or future' (Pick, 2009:95). Tense may be combined with an aspect but is distinct from it. For instance an action in the present cannot be perfective. Languages generally express aspect, but not all languages express tense such in the case of the Malay language (Pick, 2009).

The English verbs are tense-ruled while the Malay verbs are affix-ruled. The structural differences between the Malay language and English language may cause certain amount of confusion to the Malay learners of English.

3.2.1 Present

There are three basic types of present time; habitual or timeless, limited and instantaneous.

The simple present tense is used to express (i) habitual actions, and (ii) universal statements of fact. In other words, the simple present tense is used for events or situations that exist always, usually or habitually in the past, present and future. For instance:

(i) I **drink** milk everyday. (habitual)

*Saya **minum** susu setiap hari.*

(ii) The earth **rotates** around the sun. (fact)

*Bumi **berputar** mengelilingi matahari.*

Habitual action with an emotional colouring such as irritation can also be expressed through the use of present progressive tense, which is usually accompanied with an adverb of high frequency. For instance:

(i) My sister **is always taking** my things.

*Adik saya **selalu mengambil** barang saya.*

Limited present time is expressed with the present progressive tense. This tense indicates an activity that is in progress and is of limited time duration. The progressive aspect of present tense has a different form as to the simple present tense.

FORM: am/ is /are + verb + -ing

For example:

(iii) I **am eating** my dinner right now.

    *Saya **sedang makan** malam sekarang.*

Instantaneous present time is expressed either with the simple present tense or present progressive tense. For instance:

(i) He **kicks** the ball to Rooney, and it goes right into the goal!

    *Dia **menyepak** bola kepada Rooney, dan ia terus masuk ke dalam gol!*

(ii) He **is kicking** the ball now.

    *Dia **sedang menyepak** bola itu sekarang.*

In Malay, there are no 'be' verbs or progressive verb form. In Malay, the closest resemblance to 'be' verbs are '*adalah'* and '*ialah'*. However, it is not compulsory to use them in the Malay language and they can be safely omitted from a sentence and still be grammatical. The progressive notion does exist in the Malay language, but it is indicated by contextual devices and connectives. In the example above, the word '*sedang'* corresponds to 'in the midst' in English. The Malay learners may view the use of progressive tense as redundant as the intended meaning is conveyed by the contextual devices (e.g. now).

In Malay, timeless or habitual present, and instantaneous present are expressed by the lexical verb alone. Habitual present time with emotional colouring cannot be expressed in the verb phrase. The emotional colouring would have to be expressed in a separate clause. Limited present time is expressed by the use of one of the progressive aspectual auxiliaries '*sedang'* or '*masih'* before the verb head.

According to Wijasuriya (1979) the problems that could occur due to the dissimilarities are:

a. Avoidance of the use of present progressive tense to express instantaneous present time.

b. Avoidance of the present progressive tense for the expression of habitual present time with emotional colouring.

3.2.2 Past

The simple past tense is used to talk about activities or situations that began and ended at a particular time in the past. Most simple past verbs are formed by adding –ed to a verb. However, some verbs have irregular past forms.

For example:

(i) He **worked** yesterday. (regular verb)

   *Dia **telah bekerja** semalam.*

(ii) They **ate** at the cafe. (irregular verb)

   *Mereka **telah makan** di kafe.*

As we can see from the sentences above, the English verb form for past tense are suffixed but not for the Malay verb forms. The Malay language uses the word '*telah*' or expressions of time such as '*semalam*' to inform readers the activity took place in the past.

However, in negative sentences, such as:

(iii) I **did not work** last month

   *Saya **tidak bekerja** bulan lepas.*

The stem form is used after the negation 'not' and the past form of 'do', which is 'did' is used instead. Hence, - ed is only added when a statement is affirmative. Negation in Malay is expressed through the word '*tidak*', there is no difference to the verb form as '*bekerja*' is used in example (i) and (iii).

The past progressive expresses an activity that was in progress at a point of time in the past or at the time of another action. The progressive aspect of the past tense form is 'was/were + verb + -ing'. For example:

(iv) We **were eating** when they came.

    *Kami **sedang makan** apabila mereka datang.*

(v) He stole my money while I **was sleeping**.

    *Dia telah mencuri duit saya apabila saya **sedang tidur**.*

From the above examples, we can see that there is no equivalent to 'was' and 'were' in the Malay language. The –ing form is expressed in the Malay language through the use of '*sedang*'. In these examples, the Malay language expresses 'past' through contextual devices '*apabila*' and '*telah*' as there are no expressions of time in examples (iv) and (v).

The problems that could occur here are as follows:

    a. The use of present tense for the past tense.

    b. The present progressive tense is used instead of past progressive tense.

3.2.3 Future

There are two ways to express future tense in English, through the use of 'be going to' and 'will'. For example:

(i) I **will** go to the market.
   *Saya **akan** pergi ke pasar.*

(ii) She **is going to** drive to school.
   *Dia **akan** memandu ke sekolah.*

From the examples above, we can see both forms correspond to the Malay adverb *'akan'*. In Malay, future time may be indicated by a time expression with the simple lexical verb. Alternatively, the auxiliary *'akan'* which denotes futurity may occur before the lexical verb as exemplified in examples (i) and (ii) above. There are no equivalent forms in Malay to 'be going to'.

The problems that could arise here are:

   a. Avoidance of the use of the present progressive tense to indicate future time.
   b. Avoidance of the forms 'be going to' that do not occur in the Malay language.

3.2.4 Perfect

In English, the present perfect is used to describe past actions that happened at an indefinite time in the past or that began in the past and continues in the present (i.e. action that are relevant at the point of speaking). The past perfect tense is used to refer to an action that took place in the past before another past action. The past tense may be

used alongside the past perfect tense if there are two actions specified in a sentence to signify the sequence of events. For example:

By the time the firemen **arrived**, the fire **had burned** the house completely.

The past perfect tense refers to the first action that took place, while the simple past tense signifies the second.

In Malay language the present perfect and the past perfect tense are indicated by *'sudah', 'telah'* or *'pernah'* followed by lexical verbs. These words correspond to the auxiliary verbs 'have', 'has' and 'had'. There are no past participles in the Malay language.

In English however, the present perfect tense has the following rule:

(i)	(plural)	have + past participle	They **have eaten**. *Mereka **sudah makan** .*

(ii)	(singular)	has + past participle	She **has washed** the clothes *Dia **telah membasuh** pakaian.*

The past perfect tense on the other hand has the following structure:

(iii)	(plural/ singular)	had+ past participle	They **had driven** to town. *Mereka **telah memandu** ke bandar.*

The problem that could arise here is:

a. The use of the present perfect tense for past perfect tense.

3.3. Malay Verbs

From the discussion on tense, we can see that the verbs in Malay language are often affixed than not. Affixation is determined by transitivity of a verb. These two verb types can be further dissected into 8 different classes (Asmah Omar & Rama Subramaniam,

1985:7) which either takes a prefix or a suffix, at times using both or neither. Certain Malay affixes may have specific semantic functions, while others are more general in nature.

3.3.1 Class I Verbs

There are roughly 50 verbs in Class I. These verbs do not take any prefix and most of them are intransitive (Asmah Omar & Rama Subramaniam, 1985:7). Among the common verbs of this class are:

Pulang	-to come back
Lari	-to run
Datang	-to come
Tidur	-to sleep
Pergi	-to go
Ketawa	-to laugh

3.3.2 Class II Verbs

Verbs of this class take the prefix me-. Most of these verbs are transitive in nature, although there may be cases when the object is not expressed.

For illustrations, let us take a look at these examples:

(i) *Siti **melawat** saudaranya di Kuala Lumpur.*

   Siti **visits** her relative in Kuala Lumpur

(ii) *Ali **melawat** sekolahnya.*

   Ali **visits** his school.

As the verb '*lawat*' is a transitive verb, the prefix *me-* is attached. It is ungrammatical in Malay to say, '*Ali lawat sekolahnya*'. In Malay, the prefix *me-* changes its form depending on the initial phoneme of the verb, but remains unchanged if the verb begins with /l/, /m/, /n/, /ny/, /r/, /w/, or /y/. For example

Me + lompat	*> melompat*	'to jump'
Me + rasa	*>merasa*	'to taste'
Me + nyanyi	*>menyanyi*	'to sing'
Me + masak	*>memasak*	'to cook'
Me + warna	*>mewarna*	'to colour'

Example of sentence:

(iii) *Doktor itu sedang* **merawat** *pesakit kanser itu.*

 The doctor **is treating** the cancer patient.

When a verb begins with /g/, /h/, /k/, or any of the vowels (a, e, i, o, u), *meng-* is used instead. The initial phoneme of the verb beginning with /k/ is dropped, except for certain borrowed words. For instance:

Me + hantar	*> menghantar*	'to send'
Me + kirim	*>mengirim* (/k/ is dropped)	'to send (letters)'
Me + kritik	*>mengkritik*	'to criticise'

(iv) *Abang* **menghantar** *saya ke stesen bas.*

 My brother **sends** me to the bus station.

When a verb begins with /b/, /f/, /p/, or /v/, *mem-* is attached. The initial phoneme of the verb beginning with /p/ or /f/ is dropped.

Me + basuh	*> membasuh*	'to wash'
Me + pakai	*>memakai* (/p/ is dropped)	'to wear'
Me + fakir	*>memikir* (/f/ is dropped)	'to think'

Example of sentence:

(v) Mereka **membasuh** pakaian setaip hujung minggu

   They **wash** clothes every weekend.

When a verb begins with /c/, /d/, /j/, /t/, or /z/, *men-* is used. The initial phoneme of verbs beginning with the letter /t/ is dropped.

Me + cari	*> mencari*	'to find'
Me + dengar	*>mendengar*	'to listen'
Me + tarik	*>menarik* (/t/ is dropped)	'to pull'

Example of sentence:

(vi) Adik **mencari** kucingnya.

   My sister **looks** for her cat.

When a verb begins with /s/, *me-* is modified to *meny-* and the initial phoneme of a verb beginning with /s/ is dropped.

Me + sapu	*> menyapu*	'to sweep'
Me + sebar	*>menyebar*	'to spread'
Me + selam	*>menyelam*	'to dive'

Example of sentence:

(vii) Pembantu rumah itu sedang **menyapu** lantai.

   The maid **is sweeping** the floor.

With a few exceptions, monosyllabic words use the prefix *menge-*

Me + cam	*> mengecam*	'to identify'
Me + cat	*>mengecat*	'to paint'
Me + lap	*>mengelap*	'to wipe'

Example of sentence:

(viii) Dia sedang **mengecat** pintu.

   He **is painting** the door.

3.3.3 Class III Verbs

Malay verbs under this class utilise the prefix *ber-* which can be further classified into 2 categories. The first category is verbs which indicate action performed by the doer himself/herself. The second category of verbs indicates an action performed by two or more persons or parties (Othman Sulaiman, 1990: 92). The prefix *ber-* is widely used in the spoken and written language. Lewis labels this class of verbs as reflexive (1968: 186).

Category 1: *cukur > bercukur*   'to shave (oneself)'

Category 2: *peluk > berpeluk*   'to embrace each other'

The verbs in Category 2 expresses reciprocity, thus it can be classified as a reciprocal verb.

Non reflexive:

(i) *Dia **mencukur** jambangnya.*

   He shaves his sideburns.

Reflexive:

(ii) *Mereka **berpeluk** apabila mendengar berita baik itu.*

   They hugged each other after hearing the good news.

The verbal forms illustrated in the above examples clearly show the reflexive verb form as contrast to the non reflexive verbs in Malay language.

In Malay, with some words, the /r/ of *ber-* is dropped for the sake of euphony. For instance in;

Belajar	'to learn'
Berenang	'to swim'
Bekerja	'to work'
Belayar	'to sail'

The prefix *ber-* has two other functions besides those aforementioned.

    I.   Progresive (having or wearing)

- *Dia **berbaju** putih.*
  He **is wearing** a white shirt.

- *Ali **tidak berkereta** walaupun dia bergaji besar.*
  Ali **does not own** a car although he earns well.

    II.   Completed action

- *Rambutnya **bersikat**.*
  Her hair **is combed**.

- *Mukanya **tidak bercukur**.*
  His face **is not shaved**.

3.3.4 Class IV Verbs

Malay verbs in this class utilize the prefix ter- which signs one or any of the following purposes:

    I.   Action is done accidentally

- *Budak itu **terminum** racun.*
  The boy (accidentally) **drank** poison.

    II.   Ability to complete (usually negative)

- *Orang tua itu tidak **terpanjat** tangga itu.*
  The old man cannot **climb** the stairs.

III.   A completed action

-    *Kereta itu sudah* **terletak** *depan rumahnya.*
     The car **is parked** in front of his house.

3.3.5 Class V Verbs

This kind of verbs contains the prefix *me-* and the suffix *–kan*. They are formed from

certain Class I and other parts of speech such as nouns, adjectives, and adverbs.

The suffix *–kan* when added to verbs, has two different important meanings (Liaw,

1988:68). When attached to intransitive verbs, its function is 'causative'. For example:

(i) *Raju* **mandi** *setiap hari.*

   Raju **takes** a bath every day.

as compared to,

(ii) *Emak* **memandikan** *bayi itu.*

   The mother **bathes** the baby.

When added to transitive verbs, however, *-kan* means 'doing something for someone

else'. Compare these two sentences:

(iii) *Saya* **membeli** *beg baru semalam.*

   I **bought** a new bag yesterday

and,

(iv) *Saya* **membelikan** *adik beg baru.*

   I **bought** a new bag for my sister.

As we can see for the example above, in English the verb forms used are the same in

examples (iii) and (iv), however the object of the sentence changes the meaning.

Some Class V verbs formed from Class I verbs are:

Class I   Class V

tinggal – 'to live'   *meninggalkan* - 'to leave'
pulang - 'to return'   *memulangkan* – ' to return something'
sampai – 'to arrive'   *menyampaikan* – 'to convey'

The following examples illustrate the manner in which these pairs of verbs are used.

*Dia **tinggal** di Shah Alam.* She **lives** in Shah Alam.	*Dia **meninggalkan** rumahnya kepada adiknya.* She **left** the house to her younger sibling.
*Dia **pulang** semalam.* He **returned** yesterday.	*Saya telah **memulangkan** buku itu.* I **have returned** the book.
*Dia **sampai** ke rumah lewat malam semalam.* He **arrived** home late last night.	*Dia sedang **menyampaikan** ucapan kepada pelajar-pelajar.* He **is giving** a speech to the students.

3.3.6 Class VI Verbs

Verbs under this class take the prefix me- and the suffix –i. Like Class V verbs, they are

formed from certain Class I verbs and other parts of speech like nouns and adjectives.

Me-…-an and *me-…-kan* often have the same meanings but nevertheless there exists an

important difference between the two. The suffix –i has two important functions.

1. To show location or direction (Liaw, 1988: 195), movement (Othman Sulaiman,

   1990: 114), locative preposition (Lewis, 1968: 192).

2. To indicate intensity, denoting that the 'action is done by many people or is done

   repeatedly' (Liaw, 1988:199), and 'static action' (Othman Sulaiman, 1990: 114).

There are some verbs which can take both *me-…-kan*, and *me-…-i.* For example '*duduk'*- to sit down, '*tidur'* - to sleep and '*masuk'*- to enter.

(i) *Pekerja itu* **menaikkan** *tangga*

   The worker **raised** the ladder –causative

(ii) *Pekerja itu* **menaiki** *tangga*

   The worker **went up** the ladder – reflexive

The above examples show that the difference between the uses of the *–kan* and *–i* structures. The suffix *–kan* when added to verbs has two important meanings. When added to intransitive verbs, its function is causative. When added to transitive verbs, however, *-kan* means 'doing something for other people'.

(iii) *Dia* **membelikan** *isterinya barang kemas.*

   He **buys** jewellery for his wife.

The suffix *–i* when added to verbs has two important functions. Its first and most important function is to show location or direction. For instance:

(iv) *Raju masuk ke kelas dan* **menduduki** *tempat saya.*

   Raju entered the class and **sat** at my place.

Another function of *me-…-i* is to indicate intensity, denoting that the action is done by many people or is done repeatedly.

(v) *Mereka* **menyalahi** *budak itu.*

   They **fault** the child.

The difference between –*kan* and –*i* is found in the reaction of the object towards the action. In a verb with suffix –*kan*, the object moves to another place. On the other hand, the object remains in its position when the suffix –*i* is used.

(vi) *Saya **memasukkan** computer itu ke dalam laci.*

   I **put** the computer into the drawer.

3.3.7 Class VII Verbs

These verbs contain the prefixes *me-* and *per-* and the suffix –*kan*. The suffix –*kan* is optional. A few Class I, II and III verbs and all adjectives take the prefix and the suffix. All class VII verbs are intransitive in nature.

Kata	*-Memperkatakan*
Lihat	*-Memperlihatkan*
Cakap	*-Mempercakapkan*

It should be noted that *per-* is rarely used alone. It combines with other affixes especially *me-, -kan* and –*i*. Combined with verbs, it usually indicates 'intensity'. For example, '*berbincang*' means to exchange opinions/ discuss something with somebody while '*memperbincangkan*' means to discuss in great detail.

(i) *Guru-guru itu **bercakap** dengan pengetua mereka.*

   The teachers **are speaking** to their headmaster.

(ii) *Mereka dapat **mempercakapkan** apa yang tersimpan di dalam hati mereka.*

   They are able **to express** what is in their hearts.

3.3.8 Class VIII Verbs

These verbs take the prefix *ber-* and the suffix *–an*. The verbs may be simple or reduplicated. The simple verbs may denote a sense of 'continuity' of action and may need a plural or collective subject.

Gantung	*-Bergantungan*	'to hang'
Salam	*-Bersalaman*	'to greet'
Lompat	*-Berlompatan*	'to jump'

(i) *Haiwan liar* **berkeliaran** *di dalam hutan itu.*

   The wild animals **roam** about the forest

The reduplication verbs denote a sense of 'reciprocity' or 'repetitive action' and require a plural subject.

Pukul - 'to beat'	*-Berpukul-pukulan* - 'to beat each other'
Kasih – 'to love'	*-Berkasih-kasihan* – 'to love each other'

(ii) *Ibu bapa dan kanak-kanak itu* **bertolong-tolongan** *di rumah.*

   The parents and children **help** each other at home.

(iii) *Kanak-kanak itu* **menolong** *ibu bapa mereka di rumah.*

   The children **help** their parents at home.

3.4 Mood

Verbs are used in context known as moods. In English, mood is expressed through a plain statement that is termed indicative mood, subjunctive mood if it is hypothetical and imperative if it is a directive or command.

In the Malay language, modal auxiliaries convey nature of feelings or mood of a sentence. Examples of modal auxiliaries are '*hendak*', '*mahu*', '*mesti*', '*boleh*', '*harus*', '*patut*' and '*dapat*' among others. However, these are generally dispensed if the meaning is clear without them.

3.4.1 Indicative

Indicative is an unmarked form of the mood system and is represented by the verbal form that indicates factuality, assertion or also questions.

For example:

(i) She practices her speech. (present indicative)

   Dia mempraktis ucapan dia.

(ii) They played well. (past indicative)

   Mereka telah bermain dengain baik.

(iii) Has the bus arrived? (question form)

   Adakah bus sudah sampai?

3.4.2 Subjunctive

The subjunctive mood is used in subordinate clauses to following a verb that expresses wish, regret, request, demand, doubt and proposal. The subjunctive can be used in both present and past forms.

In the present subjunctive, the verb is always in the singular and present tense form, regardless of tense and plurality. Sentences in which the verbs 'is', 'are', 'was', 'were' or 'will be' is used should be replaced with the root word 'be'. For instance

(iv) It is necessary that she **resigns** from the company. (incorrect)

   *Dia **patut** meletak jawatan dari syarikat itu.*

It is necessary that she **resign** from that company. (correct)

*Dia **patut** meletak jawatan dari syarikat itu.*

'*Patut*' indicates the speaker's belief in the suitability of the action.

(v) It is mandatory that parents **should be** present at the meeting. (incorrect)

*Adalah **wajib** untuk ibu bapa hadir di mesyuarat itu.*

It is mandatory that parents **be** present at the meeting (correct)

*Adalah **wajib** untuk ibu bapa hadir di mesyuarat itu.*

In example (v) '*wajib*' is similar in meaning to '*mesti*' which entails a strong sense of obligation or compulsion which is imposed by the speaker who has the authority to demand.

The past subjunctive mood expresses a condition which is hypothetical or doubtful. It is often found in if-clause. This is illustrated by the use of 'were' for both singular and plural subjects. When the 'be' verb is not used, the past tense form of a verb is used instead. For example:

True situation : I am short.
: *Saya pendek.*

Making a wish : I wish I were tall.
: *Saya berharap saya tinggi.*

Using If : If I were tall, I would be a great basketball player.
: *Jika saya tinggi, saya akan menjadi seorang pemain bola keranjang yang hebat.*

The above is an example of subjunctive mood as it expresses a condition that is contrary to a fact. From the above example, we can see that 'were' is used for singular subjects in a contrary-to-fact 'if-clause'.

3.4.3 Imperative

The imperative does not make statements but express instructions, directives, and orders which are usually issued to the hearer as in 'Keep quiet' and 'Leave the room'. The major contrast between these two languages is in terms of pronouns used to refer to the addressee. In Malay, there are '*anda*' (singular and plural), '*awak', 'kamu', 'engkau'* (singular), '*awak'/ 'kamu semua'* (plural) which all corresponds to the English 'you'.

3.5 Conclusion

In English, the tense system gives information of the event while the aspect system gives information about the kind of event the verb refers to; 'whether an event is changing, repeated, habitual, complete and so forth' (Richards, 1985: 158). The Malay learners of English have difficulty understanding the concept of time such as present, past and future expressed by the English tense aspect system as it appears redundant to the Malay learners. The Malay language is tense- free and the verbs do not inflect to reflect time but contextual devices and time expressions are used instead.

The mood in the English language is more prevalent as compared to the Malay language. Again, there are no changes to verb forms to express different moods in the Malay language as to the English language. The Malay language may use modal auxiliaries but this may not always be the case if the intended meaning is clear while the English language uses different verb forms in each mood. Hence, Malay students may find it confusing as to the special verb forms used for instance in the subjunctive mood.

CHAPTER 4

ERROR ANALYSIS

4.1 Objective

A study of the learner's errors is important due to its pedagogical significance and its theoretical value in providing for a better comprehension of second language acquisition. Hence, there is a need to undertake a study on the nature of the errors occurring in specific language situations. Until we are able to give a linguistic explanation of the nature of the learner's errors, we can neither propose pedagogical measures to deal with them nor infer from them about the processes of learning (Corder, 1974:205).

In studying errors, educators, linguists and researchers must be forewarned of the grave distinction between mistakes and errors in language learning. In Corder's article 'The Significance of Learners' Errors', he differentiates between 'mistakes' and 'errors' in foreign language acquisition (1967:166). 'Mistakes' are defined as asystematic occurrences due to the learner's psychological condition, while 'errors' are systematic and of great importance in the learning process. Error deviations reflect the learner's competence while mistakes do not. The rate of error commission in the mother tongue is minimal as compared to in second language.

On the significance of learner's errors, Corder further writes:

> A learner's errors are significant in three different ways. First to the teacher, in that they will inform him, if he undertakes a systematic analysis, how far towards the goal the learner has progressed and, consequently what knowledge the learner lacks. Second, they provide researchers with input as to how language is learned or acquired. Third, they are indispensable to the learner himself, because we can regard the making of errors a device the learner uses in order to learn. It is a way of testing his hypothesis about the nature of the language he is learning. The making of errors then is a strategy employed when acquiring their mother tongue and when learning a second language (1967:67).

One of the features of most versions of the communicative approach is the toleration of 'mistakes' or 'errors' produced by learners. Traditionally, 'errors' were considered a negative aspect and had to be eradicated (Ellis, 2008). The more recent acceptance of such errors in learners' language is based on a fundamental shift in perspective from the more traditional view of how second languages are acquired. An error is not an obstacle that hinders a student's progress, but is probably a clue to the active learning progress being made by a student as he tries out strategies of communication in the new language. Alike to children who produce ungrammatical form while acquiring their L1, we can expect the L2 learner to produce overgeneralisations at certain stages.

However, EA is not without its drawbacks. The explanation of errors is rather speculative and may not pinpoint the exact source of errors. In the words of Bell (1981) 'recognition and description of errors and mistakes is far from simple… explanation is a far more difficult task'. Taylor (1986) also agrees with Bell for he states that 'errors are not primitive absolutes whose identification is unproblematic'.

Nonetheless, although linguists do acknowledge EA's limitations, it is still regarded as 'an important key to a better understanding of the process underlying L2 learning'. Its practical and theoretical importance cannot be undermined since 'they show us what the learner is thinking and guide us towards his pedagogical needs, to correct his wrong assumptions and move closer to the actual system of the target language' (Bell, 1981). Corder (1967) maintained that errors provide feedback to teachers on the effectiveness of the teaching materials and teaching procedures. The information derived form EA could serve as basis for designing syllabuses on second language or foreign language teaching.

Furthermore, the study of errors could also help give a picture of the psychological processes involved in the learner's attempt at effective language performance. While the nature and quality of the learner's performance may not provide a complete picture of his knowledge in L2, it is probably the most significant source of information about the extent of his knowledge. As a whole, this EA on the use of the English verb tense by Malay learners of English could help teachers and learners themselves to understand the psychological processes involved in the learning of the language. Errors should not be regarded as negative signs or failure to achieve second language competence, but as an indication of the learner's hypotheses of the rules of the L2.

The EA in this study deals only with the grammatical errors related to English tense system since 'tense… usage in English are well known as some of the most troublesome areas for the foreign learner' (Edstrom, 1972: 124). There have been many studies conducted overseas and locally to determine the source of difficulty that students face when dealing with the English tense system.

Raad (2009) who did an EA of English texts written by advanced Iraqi students considers the 'be verb' a troublesome area for Iraqi English learners. Although the omission of 'be verbs' are the result of L1 influence, the progress is not related to L1. Raad blames it on the lack of practice and exposure to the English language that has maintained the effect of Arabic upon the linguistic behaviour of the Iraqi learners in the use of the 'be verbs'.

In another study by Sharifah Zakiah Wan Hassan et al. (2009) who looked at oral performance of University Technology Mara graduates revealed that the subjects grammatical accuracy were depressingly low and required remedial assistance. The most grammatical errors that the subjects made seemed to be the most basic and most

anticipated errors such as SVA, verb tense and word formation due to the influence from their first language, the Malay language.

Maros et al. (2007) studied interference in learning English among rural Malay secondary school students and discovered that the three most frequent errors are: 1) the use of articles, 2) subject-verb agreement, and 3) copula 'be'.

From the previous studies mentioned above, we can conclude that the English verbal system is a common challenge faced by most Malay learners of English.

4.2 The subjects

I choose to gather data from a particular training centre as I was an English language instructor teaching the Intensive English Programme (IEP) and the English Language Proficiency Programme (ELPP) from March 2009 until November 2010. All data was collected prior to November 2010.

The sample of learner language was collected from 20 Malay learners who are native speakers of Malay. Subjects originate from various FELDA settlements across the country. They are all males aged between 19 to 22 years chosen at random, majoring in aircraft engineering at the training centre. All subjects are males due to convenience sampling, as there are no females in that particular batch. As of the subjects' English language results for Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia (SPM), their results ranged from 1A, 2A, 3B, 4B to 5C. At the point of sampling, they are a homogeneous group with average language proficiency of a Band 6 according to International English Language Testing System (IELTS).

For each stage of their training, there is an English requirement that has to be achieved before they are able to proceed to the next stage. There are 3 stages of training that

requires three different English language requirements. At the end of each stage, subjects have to meet the required band scores for each skill before they can proceed to the next stage of training.

Table 4.1: English Language Requirement for each Stage

Stages of training	English Training provided	English language requirement (IELTS band scores)
Stage 1	Intensive English Programme *(300 contact hours)*	Reading: Band 5 and above Writing: Band 5 and above Listening: Band 5 and above Speaking: Band 4.5 and above
Stage 2	English Language Proficiency Programme *(6 hours per week)*	Reading: Band 6 and above Writing: Band 6 and above Listening: Band 6 and above Speaking: Band 5.5 and above
Stage 3	English Language Proficiency Programme *(6 hours per week)*	Reading: Band 7 and above Writing: Band 7 and above Listening: Band 7 and above Speaking: Band 6.5 and above

In Stage 1 of training, all subjects underwent a 60 –day Intensive English Programme. Of the 300 contact hours, 75 hours were dedicated towards grammar lessons. Subjects were taught the present tense, past tense, perfect tenses, passive structures and SVA. The remaining hours focused on developing reading, writing, listening, speaking and phonetics. At the end of the Intensive English Programme, subjects' language proficiency was tested using IELTS. They had to obtain Band 5 and above for reading, writing and listening and Band 4.5 and above for speaking before they were able to commence their technical training. A Band 5 can be described as a modest user of the language.

Following that, subjects are given 6 hours of English classes every week in Stage 2. A two hour grammar lesson is conducted fortnightly. These grammar lessons at this stage are an extension of the previous stage, in which learners are exposed to the tenses and their usage in depth. In Stage 2, subjects had to obtain Band 6 and above for reading, writing and listening and Band 5.5 and above for speaking as per requirement of the training course. A Band 6 can be translated as a competent language user.

Currently, all subjects have met the English language requirements and are completing Stage 3 of training. Subjects are due to complete this stage in December 2011.

The details of each subject's English proficiency as of Stage 1 and 2 are as below.

Table 4.2: Subject's English Language Proficiency

Subject	Stage 1				Stage 2			
	Reading	Writing	Listening	Speaking	Reading	Writing	Listening	Speaking
S1	6	5	5	5	6	6	7	6.5
S2	6	5	5	5	6	6	7	6
S3	7	5	5	5.5	6	6	6	5.5
S4	5	5	6	5.5	6	6	6	5.5
S5	5	5	5	4.5	6	6	6	5.5
S6	6	5	5	4.5	6	6	7	6.5
S7	5	5.5	5	5	6	6	6	6.5
S8	5	5	6	5	6	6	6	5.5
S9	6	5	6	5	6	6	7	6
S10	7	6	7	5.5	6	6.5	7	5.5
S11	6	5.5	5	5	7	6	7	6
S12	6	5	5	4.5	7	6	6	5.5
S13	5	5	6	5	6	6	6	5.5
S14	5	5	5	4.5	6	6	6	6
S15	5	5.5	5	5	6	6	6	5.5
S16	6	5	7	5.5	6	6	7	5.5
S17	6	5	5	5	7	6	7	6
S18	5	5	5	5	6	6	7	6
S19	6	5	5	5	7	6	7	6
S20	5	5	5	5	7	6	6	6

4.3 The instrument

To obtain the necessary corpus, two methods were used, namely (1) essays, and (2) questionnaires.

4.3.1 Essays

The subjects were required to write an essay of about 250 words. The title given is 'The responsibility to ensure an aircraft reaches its destination safely has always fallen upon the shoulders of the pilot. In your opinion, should pilots be solely responsible for the safety of a flight?' (see Appendix 2 for essay samples). There are two reasons as to why this topic was chosen as the source of data. Firstly, this topic is argumentative in nature. Argumentative tasks demand a more elaborated content and influences learners to use more advanced vocabulary and grammatical structures as compared to other types of essays (Skehan & Foster, 1999). For instance, a narrative is usually written in the past tense. Thus, it is hoped that an argumentative essay will yield a wider range and equal distribution of all tenses instead of only a particular tense. Secondly, this topic was chosen as it is very much related to the subjects' course of study. This is also a familiar topic to the subjects as they had a discussion on the same topic in the previous lesson. Hence, subjects should be able to write confidently.

The subjects were encouraged to write freely and they were given 40 minutes to complete the writing task. The essay writing was administered by their English language instructor during the subjects' English lesson. The aim of the writing task was to find out how well the learners could apply the English tense system correctly. Essay writing is a good instrument that looks into the language of the students. Heaton (1988:127) claims that essay writing is a useful tool as '… it provides the students with an opportunity to demonstrate their ability to organise language material, using their

own words and ideas, and to communicate'. Halliday and Hassan (1976, as cited in Saadiyah Darus & Khor, 2009:247) point out that 'writing allows writers to demonstrate their ability to construct a string of well-connected sentences that are grammatically and logically correct'. Also it was felt that such 'essays would reflect the learner's normal performance' (Oyedepo, 1987:204). This is because, while writing, less attention is usually given to grammar and more towards idea construction. Hence, analysing errors in L2 writing can serve as a guide to the inner working of the language learning process.

4.3.2 Questionnaire

A questionnaire was constructed to elicit information from each subject about his linguistic background and the extent of exposure to the English language (refer Appendix 1). Each subject in the study was given a questionnaire during their English lesson. They were given 15 minutes to complete the questionnaire. The questionnaire, which was devised by the researcher, aims to gain an insight of the subject's exposure to the second language and the difficulty they face in using the English tense system. The questionnaire consist of 3 sections; Language background, English language proficiency, and English language difficulties.

The first section inquired on the subject's language background; their first, second and third language if any. In the second section, subjects were required to indicate their English language grade for Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia (SPM) and the IELTS band scores obtained during their Stage 1 and 2 training. In the last section, subjects were given a likert-type scale to rate the English tenses according to level of difficulty. Lastly, they were also asked to pinpoint the most difficult areas of the English tense system that has always troubled them.

4.4 Description of errors

There data were analysed to determine the types and frequency of verb from errors the subjects made in the writing. The errors were identified and categorised following Abbott (1980) and Corder (1981) classification:

a) omission;
b) addition;
c) selection; and
d) ordering

Errors of omission are made when compulsory elements are omitted. For instance the omission of the -ed marker in simple past tense verbs. Very often, the subjects may omit the 'be verb' or the modal 'will' to express future tense in a sentence too. Another example is the omission of –ing form from a gerund or a progressive action.

Errors of addition are made when unnecessary elements are present with the use of redundant markers, such as adding the –s marker on plural nouns in the simple present tense. Double marking is also an example of addition as there are two items for the same tense feature, for example, 'he didn't cooked'. The past tense marker –ed/d or the 'be verb' may also be redundantly added in cases where it is incorrect to do so, for example, 'putted' and 'is happens'. Lastly, addition may occur when –es/s, -ed/d or –ing is added after a modal verb or an infinitive which should be followed by a stem verb.

Errors of selection occur when the wrong forms of the verbs are chosen in place of the right ones. These commonly occur in tense forms for passive verbs. Another common selection error is using the past tense form of the verbs to express present condition and vice versa. Alternatively, the present progressive tense may be used instead of simple present. Errors in the past participle form and wrong verb form such as using 'does' instead of 'is' are also categorised under selection.

Errors of ordering are made when correct elements are wrongly sequenced, for instance, in the use of phrasal verbs.

To address the issue of reliability of coding errors, inter-coder reliability was used. Half of the sample (10 essays scripts) was marked and coded by the researcher and another instructor of English who has a long experience in this domain, and is familiar with the English tense system and their usage very well. The scripts were read twice, once by the researcher and once by the instructor. The researcher and the instructor both counted and classified errors independently. Number of errors for each verb tense were recorded and listed by both. The two results of coding were then compared and generated a 70% similarity rate. Both researcher and instructor then underwent a discussion to arrive at similar frame of referencing mentally when coding is carried out. The researcher then marked and coded the remaining 10 scripts independently twice with an interval of 10 days between coding sessions.

4.5 Analysis and discussion

The ultimate objective of error analysis is the explanation of errors. This section attempts to explain how errors occur and subsequently tries to identify the source of errors. According to Bell (1981), this particular stage involves the hypothesising of the processes in the minds of the learners which may have led to the error.

Each script was read and then an analysis of all the errors was done for each error category classified. Errors were classified in terms of the target language categories that have been violated rather than the linguistic categories used by the learner. For example, the error in this sentence, *Last night, I study Chemistry*, would be classified under past tense and not under present tense.

Accounting for the frequency of errors depended on the number of times they occurred.

Of the errors in the tense system, the present tense constitutes 41%, the past tense 4.1%, the future tense, 2.9%, the present perfect 2.3%, the past perfect 1.7% and other verb forms 48%, as is shown in Table 4.3.

It can be seen that with regards to tenses, respondents have greater difficulty with the present tense whilst other verb forms such as future, perfect and past tense have a much lower percentage of errors. Overall, the errors that fall under the category of other verb forms constitute the majority of errors at 48%. In this category, there are three types of errors, SVA, -ing forms and infinitives. SVA errors make up most of the 48% in the other verb form category. This category was added to account for errors besides verb tense. Although this study focuses on verb tense, previous studies have indicated that Malay learners do have problems with SVA, infinitives, modals, –ing forms, and participles. Hence, this category was created as the above errors may indirectly influence the tense in a sentence.

Table 4.3: Percentage of Errors

Tenses	% Of errors
Present	41
Past	4.1
Future	2.9
Present perfect	2.3
Past perfect	1.7
Other verb forms	48
Total	100

Categories of verb tense errors

The verb tense errors are further analysed under the categories of omission, addition, selection and ordering. This is done do as to provide a clearer picture of the types of verb tense errors committed and the percentages. The findings from the questionnaire

indicates that students rated present tense, present perfect tense and past perfect tense as the three most difficult tense to master while the future tense is the least difficult tense in the English language.

The detailed breakdown of the errors under the categories of omission, addition, selection and ordering is as below.

Table 4.4: Verb Tense Errors

Verb tense	Omission		Addition		Selection		Ordering		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Present	27	38.6	21	30	22	31.4	0	0	70	100
Past	6	86	0	0	1	14	0	0	7	100
Future	3	60	0	0	2	40	0	0	5	100
Present perfect	3	75	0	0	1	25	0	0	4	100
Past perfect	1	33.3	1	33.3	1	33.3	0	0	3	100
Others: Infinitives	3	10.7	15	53.6	10	35.7	0	0	28	100
SVA	25	55.6	5	11.1	15	33.3	0	0	45	100
-ing forms	5	55.6	1	11.1	3	33.3	0	0	9	100

In terms of tenses, all tenses have the most errors in the omission category followed by selection. Other verb forms errors such as SVA and –ing forms indicate that errors are also mostly found in omission while infinitive errors are mostly found in addition category.

Table 4.5: Errors According to Categories

Verb tense	Omission		Addition		Selection		Ordering	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Present	27	37.9	21	48.8	22	40	0	0
Past	6	8.2	0	0	1	1.8	0	0
Future	3	4.1	0	0	2	3.6	0	0
Present perfect	3	4.1	0	0	1	1.8	0	0
Past perfect	1	1.4	1	2.3	1	1.8	0	0
Others:								
Infinitives	3	4.1	15	35	10	18.2	0	0
SVA	25	34.3	5	11.6	15	27.3	0	0
-ing forms	5	6.8	1	2.3	3	5.5	0	0
Total	73	100	43	100	55	100	0	0

Table 4.5 shows that in terms of categories, omission errors occurs the most, 42.7%, followed by selection errors, 32.2%, and addition errors 25.19%. There were no ordering errors in the sample.

Present tense errors in the omission category is the highest with 37.9%. All errors in this category represent the omission of the present 'Be' verb (is/ are). SVA errors are considerably high at 34.3%, followed with errors in past tense with 8.2%

With regards to addition errors, the highest are found in present tense, 48.8% followed by infinitives with 35% and SVA with 11.6%. The least number of addition errors are found in past perfect and the –ing form, both a mere 2.3% each.

Most of the errors in the selection category are also found in the use of present tense, 40%, followed by SVA, 27.3% and the infinitives with 18.2%. The –ing form errors constitute 5.5%, followed by future tense 3.6% and lastly past tense, present perfect and past perfect a minority of 1.8% each.

In short, omission errors are the highest among all categories. The most frequent errors in the omission category are related to the omission of the present 'Be' verb and lack of SVA (3rd person singular -s). Malay learners of English find these two areas the most

challenging as the Malay language permits sentences without verbs and verbs in Malay do not need to agree with the number or status of the subject. The high frequency of these two errors concurs with Maros et al. (2007), Saadiyah Darus & Khor (2009), and Wee's et al.'s (2010) findings in their respective studies of error analysis among Malay ESL learners. All indicate the frequencies of these two types of errors were significantly higher as compared to omission of '–ing' and '–ed'.

Some of the errors involving tenses can be predicted from a contrastive analysis, but others cannot. The Malay verb is not inflected for tense. Tense is indicated either by the context or by the use of adverbials. Thus it can be predicted that the present tense form will be used for past tense. Errors involving the use of one tense for another (with the exception of the present tense used for the past tense), cannot be predicted through contrastive analysis. However, CA was able to predict the avoidance of certain tenses and structures due to the differences of both languages. These errors are intralingual in nature and represent the operation of the different learning strategies used (see 2.5).

4.5.1 Omission of 'be' verbs

The omission of present 'be' verbs is overall the highest with a total of 27 errors. This error can be predicted based on the CA of both languages. As mentioned previously, the Malay language allows sentences without a verb form (refer 3.2.1). A copula is an option that is usually omitted. Thus, it can be predicted that an equivalent structure in English will occur. Previous studies on second language learner often cite this as a common problem for many second language learners of English regardless of the learner's mother tongue. The source of this error can be native language interference and also incomplete application of L2 grammar rules. Examples of 'be' verb omission are:

I.   On the other hand, Air Traffic Controllers (ATC) is the one who **(is)** responsible to get and convey any information to the pilot either on the ground or air.

II.   These people will assist them until the passengers **(are)** on board their flight.

III.   Therefore, passengers **(are)** very desperate to have ATC's help for their own safety.

4.5.2 Present tense and past tense

The scripts show that the students tend to lapse from one tense to the other and in the process, students tend to omit the past tense endings (suffix) and to add the endings (suffix) to words which should be in the present tense. This explains the omission errors in the past tense and a considerably high occurrence of addition errors in the present tense. Most respondents find it difficult to infer from the context when time reference is omitted. This will then lead to the use of present tense for past actions as predicted by contrastive analysis (see 3.2.2).

Below are examples of omission errors where students lapse from the past tense to the present tense.

I.   Problems can be minimised but not **eliminate.**

II.   Other groups **involve** in order to ensure aircraft is fit to fly besides pilot are engineers, civil department, staff and Quality Assurance.

III.   These factors contribute to (a) large number of fatalities as what (had) happened in Tenerife Island **involves** two Boeing 747 (colliding with) each other.

Plausible reconstruction of each could be:

I.   Problems can be minimised but not **eliminated**.

II.   Other groups **involved** in order to ensure aircraft is fit to fly besides pilot are engineers, civil department, staff and Quality Assurance.

III. These factors contribute to (a) large number of fatalities as what (had) happened in Tenerife Island **involved** two Boeing 747 (colliding with) each other.

Example (i) clearly shows that the subject is confused with the grammar rules. This is because, after 'not' the stem form is normally used in active sentences. However, in this instance, the sentence is in the passive. The subject used the correct verb form 'minimised' after the passive modal auxiliary but retorted to stem form for the second verb due to the negation element. This is because students have been drilled to use the stem form after the negator 'not' in present tense, past tense and after modal auxiliaries. However, this rule is limited to certain contexts and not to the perfect tenses or to passive structures. Hence, learners have to continuously and consciously think of the list of 'do's and don'ts' of grammar when writing. This error is an example of ignorance of rule restriction (see 2.5.2) as the subject fails to perceive the contrast of negation which occurs in passive and active structures while also taking the tense into account.

As for example (ii) and (iii), Asian students tend to use stem forms of the verbs in all context regardless of the tense as 'most Asian languages use the stem forms of nouns and verbs in all context so that both the inflections of English and the concepts behind them seem to convey redundant information' (George, 1972: 13-14). It is common to have time indicated in a sentence; however, in the absence of time to indicate if the event or action is in the present or past, learners are confused and tend to use the stem form. As the Malay verbs are not inflected for tense unlike the English verbs, learners need to infer the tense from the context or from the adverbials used. Failure to do so, will result in the use of present tense for the past tense as predicted by CA (see 3.2.2)

Below are examples of addition errors when students lapse from the present tense to the past tense. These errors cannot be explained by CA.

I. In order to release the aircraft for service, they must **carried** out all the required maintenance task for that specific aircraft for example **carried** out visual inspection on fuselage of aircraft.

II. Next, many air crashes **happened** because of inexpert or poor trained air traffic controller.

III. In addition, the cabin crew or the flight attendant also **contributed** to the safety of the passengers.

The correct forms are:

I. In order to release the aircraft for service, they must **carry** out all the required maintenance task for that specific aircraft for example **carry** out visual inspection on fuselage of aircraft.

II. Next, many air crashes **happen** because of inexpert or poor trained air traffic controller.

III. In addition, the cabin crew or the flight attendant also **contributes** to the safety of the passengers.

Learners are confused as to which tense should be used as there is no clear time reference in the sentences. Most of the subjects find it difficult to choose a tense when writing as they would need to choose an appropriate tense based on the context. In a sentence, learners may use more than one tense making it even more complex. There are also many rules and exceptions attached to the simple present tense such as the stem form has to be used after auxiliaries, stative verbs cannot take the progressive form and the differences between simple present tense and the present progressive tense. Learners have to be conscious of these rules and apply them correctly to each verb used. All these

may exhaust the learner leading to overgeneralising or simplifying of rules in which the learner over-extends one rule to another instance and violates its restrictions in the target language. Common examples of these types of errors can be seen in passives and negation structure.

4.5.2.1 Passive and active structures

The structure of an English passive is quite similar to that in Malay, by putting the object in the subject position and moving the agent to a post-verbal position preceded by the preposition 'by'. In Malay, passive structures, the preposition '*oleh*' precedes the agent. Although the syntactically similar, the construction of English passives, requires passive verb formations. This is achieved by inserting the passive auxiliary before the lexical verb, it taking the –ed participle form. In Malay, the verb form may be inflected by '*di*' to form the passive verb. The following example is from Liaw (1999:308):

> *Kereta itu akan dibeli oleh Encik Anwar besok.*
> car   that will bought by Mr   Anwar   tomorrow
> 'The car will be bought by Mr Anwar tomorrow.'

The failure to understand the past participle used in passives would result in the following errors:

    I.   The safety of passengers on board **will take** seriously by the airlines.

    II.   A lot of parties and personnel **involve** in ensuring an aircraft can fly safely.

   III.   They **suppose** (to) provide good facilities to the passengers.

Plausible reconstruction of each could be:

    I.   The safety of passengers on board **is taken** seriously by the airlines.

II.   A lot of parties and personnel **are involved** in ensuring an aircraft can fly safely.

III.   They **are supposed** (to) provide good facilities to the passengers.

Sentences (ii) and (iii) are direct translation of the Malay language.

I.   A lot of parties and personnel **involve** in ensuring an aircraft can fly safely.

Banyak pihak dan anggota terlibat dalam memastikan pesawat bisa terbang dengan selamat.

II.   They **suppose** (to) provide good facilities to the passengers.

Mereka sepatutnya memberi kemudahan yang baik kepada penumpang.

According to Wijasuriya (1979:268), these errors cannot be predicted by CA and have to be attributed to learning strategies. Errors in English passives could be due to ignorance of rule restriction and also incomplete application of rules. Learners do not perceive the contrast of active and passive verb forms as contrasted in the L2 grammar (see 2.5.2). This is an example of the reduction strategy that is practiced by a learner to reduce his linguistic burden.

4.5.3 Future tense

Future tense was rated as the easiest tense to master in the English tense system. There only 5 errors in the future tense; 3 omission errors and 2 selection errors. As predicted by CA, learners avoided using the present progressive to denote future time and the 'be going to' structure that does not occur in the Malay language (see 3.2.3).

Examples of omission errors are

I.   This can cause an aircraft to crash and a lot of lives will lost.

II.   If faulty information (is) given to the pilots, the aircraft will collide and they do not have such high-tech system that enable the aircraft to brake on the air.

III. After they (are) satisfied with the task that has been carried out, they sign the aircraft (off) and give the certificate of release to service.

Plausible reconstructions of the above sentences are:

I.   This can cause an aircraft to crash and a lot of lives will **be** lost.

II.   If faulty information (is) given to the pilots, the aircraft will collide and they do not have such high-tech system that **will** enable the aircraft to brake on the air.

III. After they (are) satisfied with the task that has been carried out, they **will** sign the aircraft (off) and give the certificate of release to service.

Example of selection errors are:

I.   Yes that, the customers **will satisfy** with our services and they will use our service frequently as their air transport.

II.   The airlines need to pay to victims' families and also **lost** their aircraft.

The correct forms are:

I.   Yes that, the customers **will be satisfied** with our services and they will use our service frequently as their air transport.

II.   The airlines need to pay to victims' families and also **lose** their aircraft.

4.5.4 Present Perfect and Past Perfect Tense

Perfect tenses are the most difficult tense to master although the findings show that the percentages are lower compared to present and past tenses. This is because the perfect

tense were only attempted several times. Harley and Swain (1978) in a study of immersion learners of French in Canada reported that the perfect forms emerge late and occur only infrequently in naturalistic learners. Students usually avoid the tense as they have difficulty mastering the past participles and the grammar rules attached to the perfect tense. In the case of the respondents, all 20 were unsure and confused with the different functions of the perfect tenses and how do they differ from the past tense. However, there were no errors in past participle found in the corpus. This could be because most past participles were of regular verbs that did not differ from the past tense form of a verb.

As mentioned previously, it was predicted that learners will use the present perfect for past perfect (see 3.2.4). If this was the case, such errors are interlingual errors due to first language interference. However, the results indicate that the past tense was used in place of the perfect tenses instead. The over-use of simple past tense often results from avoidance of more difficult forms. The use of the past tense to refer to all past actions is a way of simplifying learning the rules attached to each tense. This is an example of developmental strategy whereby learners fail to learn the complex type of structure as they find that they could still get the ideas across by using relatively simple rules. The strategies that are used here are overgeneralisation and incomplete application of rules. As the learner's language proficiency advances, they should be able to apply the perfect tenses correctly.

The errors committed in this area is mainly due to the omission of the auxiliary verb 'have', 'has' and 'had'.

Examples of omission errors in present perfect tense are:

I.   Once the LAE **(has)** approved the condition of the aircraft, the flight is on his responsibility.

II. They **(have)** also been trained to give emergency aid such as CPR to enable them to cope with unwanted event(s).

Example of omission error in the past perfect tense is:

I. These factors contribute to (a) large number of fatalities as what **(had)** happened in Tenerife Island that involved two Boeing 747 colliding with each other.

To form the perfect tense correctly, students need to choose the correct form of auxiliary verb (have or has for present perfect) and (had for past perfect). In the Malay language, all three forms correspond to the words '*telah*', '*sudah*' or '*pernah*' which are used to indicate an action in the past. Students are also unfamiliar with the rules and functions of the perfect tenses as well as the differences between simple past tense and the past perfect tense as they both express past events and actions.

4.5.5 Infinitives

There are 28 errors found in this category and they are 15 addition errors and 10 selection errors. There were only 3 omission errors.

Examples of addition errors are:

I. To maintain the safety in recommended level, not only the pilot, other personnel such as Air Traffic Controller, Engineering department and cabin crew are also involved in ensuring the passengers can reach **to** their destination safe and sound.

II. First and foremost, the engineers (are) also involved in ensuring that passengers can reach **to** their destination safe and sound.

III.   First and foremost, air traffic controller is the one who is in-charge in locating the path that must be followed by the aircraft to reach **to** their destination.

In the examples given, the infinitives bolded should not have been added to the sentences.

Examples of selection errors are:

I.   ATC is the one that gives directions and maintains communication **to** the pilot in the cockpit.

II.   Thus, air traffic controllers are responsible **to** this matter.

In the examples given above, the words bolded should be:

I.   ATC is the one that gives directions and maintains communication **with** the pilot in the cockpit.

II.   Thus, air traffic controllers are responsible **for** this matter.

Examples of omission errors are:

I.   Any defect on the aircraft, even a loosening bolt can cause the aircraft **(to)** crash.

II.   They (are) supposed **(to)** provide good facilities to the passengers.

Since 28 errors in total are found in the infinitives, we can assume that students do find difficulty in this area. The subjects indicated that they were unsure of the purpose and functions of the infinitive to. This may result in amplifying or underutilising the infinitives. This type of error is due to inadequate knowledge of the target language.

4.5.6 –ing form

There were only 9 errors in the –ing form. Omission errors constitute a majority of errors in this category followed by selection and lastly addition.

Example of omission errors are:

I.   When **sign** the CRS, they must ensure all work (is) done effectively and consider the passengers that will board the aircraft.

II.   ATC could prevent this from **happen** if they realised how big is (their) responsibility to ensure safe operation of aircraft.

From the errors above, we can assume that the students involved are confused with the simple present tense, present progressive tense and also gerunds. Gerunds and the present participles both end in –ing. However, gerunds are verbs that functions as nouns. Many second language learners have problems identifying gerunds and often confuse them with the progressive tense.

4.5.7 Subject-verb agreement

SVA errors are the second highest after the present tense. There are a total of 45 SVA errors. The majority of errors are omission totalling up to 25, followed by selection with 15 errors and lastly 5 addition errors. SVA errors is a common theme that reoccurs among many EA studies related to Malay learners of English (Haja Mohideen Mohamad Ali, 1991; Maros et al., 2007; Sharifah Zakiah Wan Hassan et al., 2009; Wee, 2009; Wee et al., 2010).

Examples of omission errors are:

I. First and foremost, engineering division **play** the most important role to maintain, repair and overhaul the aircraft on ground.

II. Engineer will no be qualified (as an) engineer unless he **get** approval from the QA department.

III. Pilot is not the only workforce that **work** hard to ensure passenger is safe.

Pilleux (2003) rationalised that students erroneously omit the –s inflection from the third person singular in their attempt to make the verb agree with the singular subject.

Selection errors occur when students erroneously use 'are' and 'is' or 'have' and 'has'. Examples of selection errors are:

I. The ATC also **have** been asked to control the movement of the aircraft at the airborne site.

II. In a nutshell, each personnel **have** their own role that need(s) to be done effectively.

III. Such information like weather and level of moisture in atmospheric air **are** required by the pilots in order to land his aircraft safely.

These SVA errors show that students face difficulties in this area. In the English language, the subject and the verb should agree in order to be grammatical. Although in most cases a singular subject would be attached to a singular verb, however, there may be exceptions, for example, the use of questions that begin with 'does'. In this instance, the root verb is used after the subject, for example, 'Does he draw?' Main verbs that occur after 'does not' are also in the infinitive. The third person singular present tense that comes after the use of modal auxiliary also uses the infinitive form. Hence, there are many exceptions to the general rule that the subject has got to agree with the verb that may confuse the Malay learners of English as there is no SVA in their mother

tongue. Hence, the absence of SVA in the native language has interfered with the learning of the target language forms.

In the questionnaires, subjects claimed to overlook SVA as it does not make much difference in meaning and because it is mostly linked to the present tense only. Although these learners may experience the use of SVA frequently and is drilled to excess, the lack of significance often prevents its acceptance into the learner's permanent memory store as a third person singular subject association (Wee et al., 2010). Besides, native language interference as mentioned above, SVA errors could also be due to overgeneralisation and ignorance of rule restriction. By using the stem form, the Malay students simplify the target language rules and reduce their linguistic burden or learning load. This process of simplifying the language 'increases the generality of rules with students extending their range of application for the rules and dropping rules of limited applicability' (Richards, 1975:118). Learners tend to omit grammatical features that do not contribute towards the meaning of an utterance.

The subjects in this study often used the 'be' verb and the verb 'have' incorrectly. The 'be' verb has 8 different forms (am, is, are, be, been, being, was, and were), 5 of these form does not resemble the stem form and must agree in person, number and tense with the subject. Thus many students are easily confused with its use as there are various conditions to be met to enable the appropriate forms to be used. The verb 'have' has three forms: 'have, has and had'. Have is often inflected in the third person singular present tense and becomes 'has', but this inflected form is often rejected for 'have' the stem form. Ho (1973) pointed out that lack of subject-verb agreement often involves forms of 'be' and 'have' functioning either as full or auxiliary verbs. This has been traced to the fact that both have irregular forms.

4.6 Findings

The study reveals the following pertaining errors in tenses:

I.   Of the errors in tenses, the percentage of for the errors in present tense is radically highest at 41% compared to the past tense, 4.1 %, the future tense, 2.9%, present perfect, 2.3% and lastly past perfect 1.7%. Errors in the other verb forms are the highest form of errors at 48%.

II.   The present tense is the most problematic tense for Malay learners. Most errors in the present tense involve the omission of the 'be' verb. This is because the Malay language permits sentences without verbs. The omission of 'be' verb rarely reduces understanding and its use is viewed as redundant by the Malay learners of English. This is an example of incomplete application of rules. Students have the tendency to construct sentences the same way they do in the native language. This is the result of negative transfer from the native language that has slipped into the learning of the L2. Another source for this omission could also be due to incomplete application of L2 rules.

III. The students tend to lapse from one tense to the other especially from present to past and vice versa. As there is no clear time indication in the argumentative essay, students are confused if the actions and events were in the past or present.

IV.   In the area of perfect tenses, although the occurrence of errors is not significantly high, subjects avoided attempting the tense and used the simple past tense instead. All errors committed centres on the omission of the verb 'has', 'have' and 'had'. In the Malay language, 'sudah', 'telah' and 'pernah' are the closest in meaning to the perfect tense. These words are used to express a completed action, is also used for all past events. Hence, students have over-

generalised to include the simple past tense, past progressive tense and the perfect tenses for all past actions.

V.   Subject-verb agreement has the highest number of errors after present tense. Malay learners of English find it difficult to comprehend this rule as there is no such rule in their mother tongue. In the Malay language, all subjects regardless of plurality require the same form of verb. In English however, this rule is particularly essential in the present tense and with the 'be' verb. Thus, the high frequency of errors in SVA could be the result of interlingual interference of the learners' mother tongue and also ignorance of rule restriction.

4.7 Conclusion

Based on the findings of the error analysis, only a small portion of the errors could be ascribed to crosslinguistic influence given that they may have occurred as a result of the differences between the subjects' L1 and the target language. Since Malay verbs do not show any tense distinction, each verb phrase in the subject's L1 can have different equivalents in the L2. Thus, errors committed can be attributed to the differences between the subjects' L1 and the L2 in terms of the temporal reference of verbs. However, most errors cannot be traced back to L1 interference. Interlingual errors are found in present tense used for past tense, omission of 3rd person singular -s, and omission of auxiliary verbs.

A significant number of errors such as the over-use of simple past tense, infinitives, passive verbs, SVA and -ing forms are due to overgeneralisation, ignorance of rule restriction and incomplete application of rules. These intralingual errors may be produced by L2 learners regardless of their mother tongue.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION AND PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Conclusion

To review, the study was based upon three research questions:

I.   What are the similarities and differences between the English and Malay verbal systems?

II. What are the common errors made by Malay learners of English when using the English tense system in writing?

III. What are some possible sources of errors?

The first research question was discussed in Chapter 3 in which the verbal systems of both languages were discussed in detail in terms of aspect, tense and mood. While comparing and contrasting the systems, certain problems that could possibly arise for Malay learners of English as a second language were highlighted.

The second research question was answered in Chapter 4 by studying 20 compositions written by Malay learners of English in a local training centre. The analysis indicated that learners made most errors in present tense. A large majority of learners were found to omit the 'Be' verb and 3rd person singular –s. The Malay learners of English find these two areas the most challenging as their native language allows sentences without verbs and verbs in Malay do not need to agree with the number or status of the subject. The high omission rate of the present 'Be'verb and the lack of SVA awareness highlighted in the findings of this study do concur with other similar studies that have been carried out on Malay learners of English (Haja Mohideen, 1991; Saadiyah Darus & Kohor, 2009; Sharifah Zakiah Wan Hassan at al., 2009; Wee, 2009; Wee et al., 2010)

The findings of the second research question then led to an attempt to discover the sources of these errors. Interestingly, most errors cannot be traced back to L1 interference. Most errors are intralingual in nature and may be produced by all L2 learners of English irrespective of their native language. Most errors resulted from overgeneralisation, ignorance of rule restriction and also incomplete application of rules. The results of this study provide evidence that although Malay is a tense-free language as compared to the English language, only little L1 interference is evident as oppose to the claim in ELT, which says, 'the most difficult areas of second or foreign language learning are the areas of differences between the two languages' (Lado, 1957; Ellis, 1985; Ellis and Barkhuizen, 2009). A summary of the findings will be further elucidated in the following section.

5.2 Summary of Findings

The purpose of this study was to determine whether differences between the English and Malay verbal systems exerts its influence over the learning of the English tense system, leading Malay learners to commit errors, and what are some of the possible sources of these errors. This study involved an error analysis of 20 compositions by Malay learners of English. Verb tense errors were then coded according to four categories; omission, addition, selection and ordering. The findings indicate that errors ascribed to Malay language interference are fewer then those ascribed to intralingual factors such as overgeneralisation, ignorance of rule restriction and incomplete application of rules.

Contrastive analysis of Malay and English verbal systems aimed to predict the errors that a Malay learner would encounter when using the English tense system. The contrastive analysis was only able to predict problems that may occur due to the

differences of both verbal systems as the employment of tense is absent in the Malay language. Hence, due to this vast difference, Malay learners will generally face difficulty to master the English tense system. As Malay verbs are not inflected for tense unlike the English verbs, learners will have the tendency to use stem verbs for all instances.

The two highest occurring errors that Malay learners of English made when using the English tense system are omission of present 'Be' verb and the omission of 3rd person singular –s. Both these errors are infamous among Malay learners of English as the findings are consistent with results of previous error analysis studies over the years (Haja Mohideen Mohamad Ali, 1991; Maros et al., 2007; Sharifah Zakiah Wan Hassan et al., 2009; Wee et al., 2010). Learners tend to drop the 'be' verb as the Malay language allows sentences without verb forms. The lack of attention to SVA can be both, due to mother tongue interference and also the complexity of the language itself. As mentioned previously (see 4.5.7), there are many exceptions to the general rule that the subject has got to agree with the verb that may confuse the learners. By using the stem form erroneously, the Malay learners simplify the target language rules and reduce their linguistic burden or learning load. This rule is easily ignored by many learners as it does not contribute towards the meaning of the utterance.

In broad representation, the results reflected that the bulk of errors are attributable to the operation of learning strategies, rather than native language interference. Hence the findings conclude that albeit Malay language being a tense-free language, not all verb tense errors is sourced from the native language. Most verb tense errors were influenced by the operation of learning strategies such as overgeneralization, ignorance of rule restriction and incomplete application of rules. Some errors may be due to more than one factor as it is not always possible to pinpoint the exact source of error.

The usefulness of CA in this study is a matter of debate. The primary belief surrounding CA is that errors were largely the product of negative transfer brought about by the differences between the native language and the second language (Ellis & Barkhuizen, 2009:52). CA was used to compare features across both verbal systems, identifying the differences, and, then predicting what errors learners would make due to these dissimilarities. From the findings of the study, certain errors were accounted for by CA. For instance, omission of 'be' verb, SVA, and the use of present tense for past tense. However, there were also an equal number of errors that escaped CA's prediction. Errors such as the use of perfect tenses, the use of past tense for present tense, infinitives, -ing, and active verb forms in passive structures. From this, it is safe to assume that although CA is useful to predict the occurrence of certain errors, it may not be able to highlight all problematic areas. In some cases, a problem predicted by CA may not be a problem to the learner as he progresses in his second language learning. As mentioned in Chapter 2, CA in its strongest form caused much doubt among linguists as empirical evidence claimed that not all errors were the result of first language influence. Di Pietro (1971:7) further suggested that some errors could be due to intralingual factors such as overgeneralisation. The findings in the present study concur that CA is a tool better used to explain errors rather than to predict errors.

As such, CA may be a more useful tool at the start of second language learning. Dulay and Burt (1980) agree that the more second language learners progress in learning the target language, the less influence from the native language will materialize. To further support this, a study is required to compare errors committed by advanced and beginners in order to investigate whether or not considerable exposure to grammar learning plays a role in reducing the influence of Malay language over learning English.

The analysis of learner's errors has contributed much literature towards the understanding of language learning. EA enables language teachers to identify errors

and also the source of these errors while taking pedagogical precautions to address these errors. EA can be distinguished from CA in that it examines all sources of errors. EA proves that errors in the second language are not all due to the learner's mother tongue as claimed by CA but they also reflect universal learning strategies. From the findings of this study, besides native language interference, overgeneralisation and ignorance of rule restriction appeared the most possible twofold cause of intralingual errors. When learners encounter the inherent complexities of the second language, they will use these two strategies to reduce their learning burden.

The significance of EA is indisputable to teachers and learners. Errors provide teachers with feedback on the learner's language proficiency, effectiveness of the teaching materials and teaching techniques and also what is lacking. It is not sufficient to merely study and categorise errors into neat groups. Only when teachers know why an error has been produced, can action be taken to correct it. The teacher will have a better understanding on how the learner's native language interferes with the learning of the second language and what learning strategies are used when learner's encounter challenging structures in the target language.

5.3 Implications for Second Language Teachers

Over the past decades, there has been a significant change in second language methodologies and materials. There has also been a shift in pedagogical focus from the prevention of errors to learning from errors. Corder (1967) claims this shift would provide invaluable information to second language researchers, teachers and learners.

The results of this study show a need to concentrate instruction on the English verbal system. The Malay learners of English face great difficulties in mastering the English verb-forms due to the differences between the verbal systems of English and the Malay

language. The English verbs are tense ruled, as opposing to the affix-ruled verbs in the Malay Language. According to Celcia-Murcia, experienced teachers unanimously will agree that the English tense system is one of the most difficult areas to master for non-native speakers (1979, as cited in Wee et al., 2010: 22). The complexity of the system will cause difficulty for all second language learners regardless of their mother tongue. Even though, all respondents in this study demonstrated an acceptable level on the IELTS examinations, there still exists a fairly wide range writing ability. Some of the respondents would benefit from remedial instruction.

As the subjects in this study are adult-learners, error correction by teachers is especially useful for it helps them to learn the exact environment in which to apply the rules (Krashen & Seliger, 1975). Correcting students' errors helps them discover the functions and irregularities of the English verbal system. One must also remember that although teacher's correction of students' errors is helpful to many students, it may not necessarily be an effective instructional strategy for every student or in all language classrooms. Peer correction or self-correction with the teacher's guidance may be a more worthwhile investment of time and effort for some teachers and students.

Before correcting students' errors, teachers need to consider whether the errors should be corrected at all, and, if so, why. When students are not able to identify their own errors, they need the assistance of someone more proficient in the language than they are (Corder, 1967; George 1972). There appears to be a general consensus among language educators that correcting three types of errors can be beneficial to second language learners as compared to correcting all errors. These three types of errors are:

i.   Errors that impair communication significantly;

ii.   Errors that have highly stigmatising effects on the listener or reader;

iii.   Errors that occur frequently in students' speech and writing.

In relation to this study, error type 3 is the recurring one. Below are some suggestions on how to improve the students' performance in this area.

5.3.1 Suggestions

i.   It is found that students are weak in tense system. Therefore, teachers should allocate at least a two-hour grammar lesson every week for remedial purposes. Teaching should progress from present tense to the past tense and then from the present perfect to the past perfect.

ii. The teacher should provide grammatical explanations in both oral and written forms of the errors committed for this will take different learning styles in consideration and provide extra reinforcement.

iii. When students receive their corrected compositions, they may be asked to rewrite them and hand then in at the next class session. The few errors that appear in the rewritten compositions are then corrected by supplying the correct form. These correction procedures could improve the students' expressions of thought, grammatical accuracy as well as contribute to the increase of word output from the beginning to the end of each semester.

iv. Ample opportunities to practice the language should be provided. Perhaps oral discussion sessions could be introduced in the course where students are encouraged to participate. Others may include assignments done in groups outside class hours and listening and responding to tapes in the library/studio.

v.   Providing opportunities for extensive reading in the target language could help overcome deficiencies thus providing exposure to the target language.

5.4 Second Language Grammar Strategies

Malaysian classrooms have seen the likes of grammar translation, audiolingualism, and CLT – three very different approaches to generating L2 knowledge and skill. Broadly speaking, grammar translation placed great emphasise on explicit knowledge, audiolingualism concentrated on automatizing language skills through rote learning and drilling, and CLT shifted focus to implicit learning through participation in meaningful communication (Dörnyei, 2009: 280). In their pure forms, all three approaches were found lacking, but, until today, the main themes of these approaches still dominate the theoretical advances in the study of instructed SLA. In the current era of L2 instruction, language educators are leaning towards eclecticism rather than holding rigidly to a single paradigm. Teachers are more concerned about the best combination of ingredients to achieve maximum effectiveness (Dörnyei, 2009: 280). Dörnyei addresses three key issues that brought waves to L2 literature: (i) Focus on form and form-focused instruction; (ii) fluency and automatization; and (iii) formulaic language. The first issue is pertinent to L2 grammar teaching.

5.4.1 Focus on Form and Form-focused Instruction

Focus on form (FoF) and the instructional approach associated with it, form-focused instruction (FFI) have become the key themes in SLA theory over the past decade (Ellis, 2008; Williams 2005; Dörnyei, 2009). Larsen-Freeman (2003:142) explains that 'language is a dynamic process of pattern formation by which humans use linguistics forms to make meaning in context-appropriate ways'. This definition highlights two key notions of language: form and meaning. The word 'grammar' has been carefully avoided as the emphasis have shifted from explicit, sentence- bound grammar

instruction to meaning-focused instruction in which some degree of attention is paid to form. One of the main proponents of the FoF approach, Ellis (2008: 869-70) has drawn up the following framework of the various form-focused options:

I.   Input-based options involve the manipulation of the language input that learners are exposed to or are required to process. The three main types of input are input flooding (i.e. input that contains many examples of the target structure), enhanced input (i.e. input with the target feature made salient to the learners) and structured input (i.e. input that has been contrived to induce processing of the target feature). Further (Ellis, 2008) puts forth the idea that learning begins by the presentation of input containing the grammatical structure. He notes that learners 'notice the structure and practice it to access short-term memory. Theoretically, the feature of grammar provided in the input may pass into long-term memory—long term memory is then seen as part of the interlanguage system'. Thus, it is important to divert learner's attention to form by providing the above mentioned inputs.

II. Explicit options involve indirect and direct instructions to help learners develop explicit knowledge of the target structure. Explicit instruction is particularly effective in cases where features of English grammar are diametrically opposed or in some way radically different from the manner of expression in the learners' L1. DeKeyser (2003), Rod (2008), Hinkel and Fotos (2002) support the role of explicit grammar instruction for adult learners. This instruction can be either explicit-inductive or explicit- deductive. In the former, learners are encouraged to induce the grammar rule for themselves while the latter features direct presentation of the grammar rule.

III. Production options involve instruction directed to enable learners to produce utterances containing the target structure. According to Ellis (2008), this can be

further divided in terms of whether it involves text-manipulation (e.g. fill in the blank exercises) or text-creation.

IV.   Corrective feedback options can either be implicit feedback (e.g. recasts or clarification requests) or explicit correction (e.g. metalinguistic explanation or elicitation). A number of studies have compared the effects of different types of corrective feedback on acquisition, but has failed to find any statistically significant differences between explicit and implicit groups. It is likely that there are contextual and individual differences that mediate any effect corrective feedback has. The effectiveness of corrective feedback thus is independent on whether it is implicit or explicit; rather it depends on the choice of corrective to suit the individual learner.

5.5 Recommendations for Further Research

The findings of a study are said to be reliable if other studies confirm them. Reliability of a study can be achieved through replication by other researchers, either by using the same methodology with different populations or using different methodologies with the same populations. One suggestion for immediate further research is therefore a replication of the present study on a larger scale. If research could show the common pattern of errors at a younger age and at what levels these errors are better corrected, then educators could better formulate methods to help correct these errors at perhaps a lower level of instruction.