

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **INTRODUCTION**

This chapter covers the background, statement of problem, objectives, research questions, theoretical framework, significance of the study, and definition of terms in the study.

#### **1.1 Background of the Study**

Over the past three decades, L1 and L2 research in the area of writing pedagogy (Cumming & So, 1996; Ferris, 1995; Gascoigne, 2004; Hendrickson, 1978; Leki, 1991; Patthey-Chavez, Matsumura & Valdés, 2004; Radecki & Swales, 1988; Searle & Dillon, 1980; Spack & Sadow, 1983; Taylor, 1981; Zamel, 1985) found that despite the paradigm shift in writing instruction, teachers still continue to embrace writing in the traditional paradigm. This emphasis on the traditional approach to teach writing which focused on surface-level errors concurs with research done by Malaysian researchers (Bhajan, 1995; Chuang, 1995; Mahaletchery, 1994; Sim, 1997).

In the Malaysian studies mentioned above, the teachers pointed out that they focused on form as the students lacked the language to express their ideas. This implies that teachers tend to link good writing to having a basic grasp of the micro skills of writing. They viewed students' texts as final products to be evaluated. They did not realise that writing is a process in which 'scaffolding' is much needed through interaction with an adult and even more competent peers to help student writers explore and discover meanings. As one of the participants in Sommers & Saltz's (2004) study expressed that her freshman writing experience of writing without guidance is like trying "to build a house without any tools" (p. 131). Thus, providing the opportunity for students to be engaged in process writing through the revision of drafts will be a more meaningful

experience which helps to enhance their creativity. Flower & Hayes (1977) stated that “the composing process is recursive, not linear” (p. 460), and this “recursive view of composing may require a recursive view of development of an individual text and the development of a writer over time” (Onore, 1984, p. 21). In other words, if students are given the chance to exercise their own authority by involving them in collaborative writing through teacher-student and student-student interactions and discussions, the teacher and peer responses during interactions can help students to be engaged in meaningful dialogue to explore and improve their revisions.

Peer interaction plays a crucial role in the process of writing. Through peer interaction, peer response helps in promoting team co-operation and sharing of ideas among students of different proficiency levels within the group to reach mutual understanding of the task at hand. This is because peer readers can provide constructive and useful feedback (Rollinson, 2005) to assist student writers in the process of writing. Berg (1999) mentioned that “peer response can be an important learning tool in a writing course because it helps student writers do what they cannot yet do for themselves, that is to detect incongruities in their texts” (p. 232). Bruffee (1999) supported the view on the importance of conversing with peers about writing as he recognised writing as a social construct. He stressed that “conversation with people we regard as our peers – our equals, members of our own community – is almost always the most productive kind of conversation” (Bruffee, 1999; p. 59). With the help from their peers, students can use their multiple talents and abilities to gain creative and multidimensional views of realities (Matthews, 1993). This will give them the opportunity to take leadership of their own writing. Hence, given the chance to be involved in decision-making, students will be motivated to continue their efforts to write and search for their emerging writing voice (Emerson, Phillips, Hunt, & Alexander,

1994). On the other hand, teachers are to act as facilitators to guide student writers throughout the writing process.

Thus, in order to know and understand how much students can gain through teacher-student and student-student interactions in the writing process, it is important to examine the questions raised here: What happens during the teacher-student and student-student interactions?, What are the types of scaffolds given by the class teacher and peers during the student-student interaction sessions? and How do students revise the first drafts of their compositions based on the class teacher and peer feedback? Understanding and knowing how teacher-student and student-student interactions work will help teachers engage students in a more meaningful dialogue to share and discover meanings in order to improve their revisions.

This study aims to address those questions by investigating how teacher-student and student-student interactions during the peer response sessions help group members to revise the first drafts of their compositions; identifying the types of scaffolds provided by the class teacher and peers during the teacher-student and student-student interaction sessions; and examining how students revise the first drafts of their compositions based on the class teacher and peer feedback.

## **1.2 Rationale of the Study**

Through a review of the related literature, it is found that a number of L1 and L2 research (Bhajan, 1995; Chuang, 1995; Cumming & So, 1996; Ferris, 1995; Ferris, 2004; Hendrickson, 1978; Leki, 1991; Mahaletchmy, 1994; Patthey-Chavez, Matsumura & Valdés, 2004; Radecki & Swales, 1988; Searle & Dillon, 1980; Sim, 1997; Spack & Sadow, 1983; Taylor, 1981; Zamel, 1985) have focused on how teachers responded to students' compositions but little emphasis has been placed on how teacher-student and student-student interactions during peer response sessions can assist ESL

student writers in Malaysian schools to revise the individual first draft of their compositions.

Besides, most research on peer response groups involved students from higher institutions of learning (Berg, 1999; Carson & Nelson, 1996; Chaudron, 1984; Connor & Asenavage, 1994; De Guerrero & Villamil, 1994; DiPardo & Freedman, 1988; Freedman, 1992; George, 1984; Hedgecock & Lefkowitz, 1992; Hittleman, 1983; Hyland, 2000; Karengianes, Pascarella, & Pflaum, 1980; Lockhart, 1994; Lockhart & Ng, 1995; Lockhart & Ng, 1996; Mangelsdorf & Schlumberger, 1992; Mccaferty, 1992; McGroarty & Zhu, 1997; Nelson & Murphy, 1992; Paulus, 1999; Villamil & De Guerrero, 1996; Zhang, 1995; Zhu, 2001), but few have focused on secondary school students (Komathy, 2000; Sim, 1998). Thus, with deep concern of the collaborative roles of the class teacher and students during peer interactions, this study seeks to investigate how teacher-student and student-student interactions during peer response sessions can assist student writers to revise the first drafts of their compositions; to identify the types of class teacher and peer scaffolds used during the teacher-student and student-student interaction sessions; and to examine how students revise the first drafts of their compositions based on the class teacher and peer feedback.

### **1.3 Statement of Problem**

Recently, the Education Minister Datuk Seri Hishammuddin Hussein stressed the importance of mastering the English Language and that “Malaysians must shed their ‘colonial baggage’ and start viewing English as a Malaysian language” (New Straits Times, 2005, p. 4). The Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak also reinstated the importance of English in a globalised world. This view was supported by the Education Minister Datuk Seri Hishammuddin Hussein who advocated that “Poor command of English will hold us back as 75 per cent of telex messages, 80 per cent of

computer data, most satellite communication, and 5,000 newspapers or more than half the newspapers in the world are in English” (The Borneo Post, 2008, p. 5). This call for concern over the importance of the English Language is because the standard of written and spoken English has declined. This matter is also pointed out by Shahrina & Norhisham (2006) as they accentuated,

One of the main concerns voiced by content course instructors is that, even though learners have reached an advanced level in their institutions, their level of writing competency seems to be lower than expected (p. 75).

The deteriorating standard of English is reflected in the students’ performance in the English Language subject in the *Penilaian Menengah Rendah (PMR)* and *Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia (SPM)* examinations at the National Level and the Sarawak State Level. For instance, according to statistics supplied by the Sarawak Department of Education (2007), the students’ performance in the English Language subject in the *PMR* examination at the National Level declined from 73.8% in the year 2005 to 71.4% in the year 2006; while at the Sarawak State Level, it decreased from 74% in 2005 to 70.4% in 2006. Likewise, the students’ performance in the English Language subject in the *SPM* examination at the National Level dropped from 74.9% in 2005 to 74% in 2006; while at Sarawak State Level, it declined from 78.4% in 2005 to 76.6% in 2006. In Malaysian schools, students are tested on three components (speaking, reading, and writing) of the language skills for the English Language subject during the *PMR* and *SPM* examinations. However, through recent interviews with twelve ESL teachers in the state of Sarawak and five teachers from Peninsular Malaysia, the researcher found that out of the three language skills tested; generally, students are weak in the writing component which carries a major percentage in the overall score of the English Language paper for the *SPM* examination. These teachers mentioned that the weak writing performance of the students is attributed to their lack of vocabulary, lack of

extra reading, poor grammar to construct sentences, influence of their mother tongue, and direct translation of sentences from the Malay Language to the English Language.

Thus, in order to develop a learner's writing skill, it is important to investigate how far ahead the learner can go when offered some assistance by adult or more competent peers which is the focus of this study. This is in line with Vygotsky's (1978) theory of learning that a child cannot perform alone but needs guidance from adult or more skilled peers to realise his or her potential development at a higher level.

Besides, based on the researcher's observation of the scenario in Malaysian schools, it is common for an English Language teacher to handle four to six classes with an average of 40 to 45 students in a class. Due to the large class size and heavy workload, teachers need to spend much time responding to their students' compositions. As such, teachers have difficulty in providing immediate comments to their students' compositions even though teachers believe that their comments would help to improve the quality of their students' compositions.

In addition, it is found that the process approach to writing has been neglected by many teachers. Due to the exam-oriented system, teachers tend to focus on the product rather than the process of writing. This means that they treat the students' first draft as the final draft without giving students the opportunity to be engaged in the process approach to writing which involves prewriting, composing, revising and editing before submitting the final draft to the teacher. As such, students face difficulty as writing is a complex activity which needs collaboration with adults or more skilled peers to act as mediators to help students explore and discover meanings in the task at hand. In other words, this product approach to writing impedes "the learners' potential, both linguistics and personal" (Prodromou, 1995, p. 21).

In view of this, there is an urgent need to search for an alternative and effective strategy to teach writing skills. This calls for the need to engage students in

collaborative teacher-student and student-student interactions so that both the teacher and peers can provide the necessary scaffolds to help student writers improve their revisions.

It is also found that past research have looked into teacher-student interaction and student-student interaction separately in assisting student writers to revise the first drafts of their compositions, but few research have looked at how teacher and students work together during teacher-student and student-student interactions in assisting student writers to revise the first drafts of their compositions. Moreover, to the best of the researcher's knowledge, no research on how both the teacher-student and student-student interactions during peer response sessions can assist ESL student writers to revise the individual first drafts of their compositions has been done in the state of Sarawak. Thus, this prompted the researcher to carry out an in-depth study in an ESL Form Four writing class in Sarawak, focusing on investigating how teacher-student and student-student interactions during peer response sessions help the group members to revise the first drafts of their compositions; identifying the types of scaffolds provided by both the class teacher and peers during the teacher-student and student-student interaction sessions; and examining how students revise the first drafts of their compositions based on the class teacher and peer feedback.

The findings in this present study will contribute towards a better understanding of the difference in the roles of the class teacher and peers during the peer response sessions in a writing class. In addition, the researcher hopes the findings in this study will shed more light as to the types of effective class teacher and peer scaffolds, as well as to understand how students revise the first drafts of their compositions based on the class teacher and peer feedback.

#### **1.4 Objectives of the Study**

This study aims to:

- 1) investigate how the teacher-student and student-student interactions during the peer response sessions help the group members to revise the first drafts of their compositions,
- 2) identify the types of scaffolds provided by the class teacher and peers during the teacher-student and student-student interaction sessions, and
- 3) examine how students revise the first drafts of their compositions based on the class teacher and peer feedback.

#### **1.5 Research Questions**

In line with the above objectives, this study seeks answers to the following three questions:

- 1) How do the teacher-student and student-student interactions during the peer response sessions help the group members to revise the first drafts of their compositions?
- 2) What are the types of scaffolds provided by the class teacher and peers during the teacher-student and student-student interaction sessions?
- 3) How do students revise the first drafts of their compositions based on the class teacher and peer feedback?

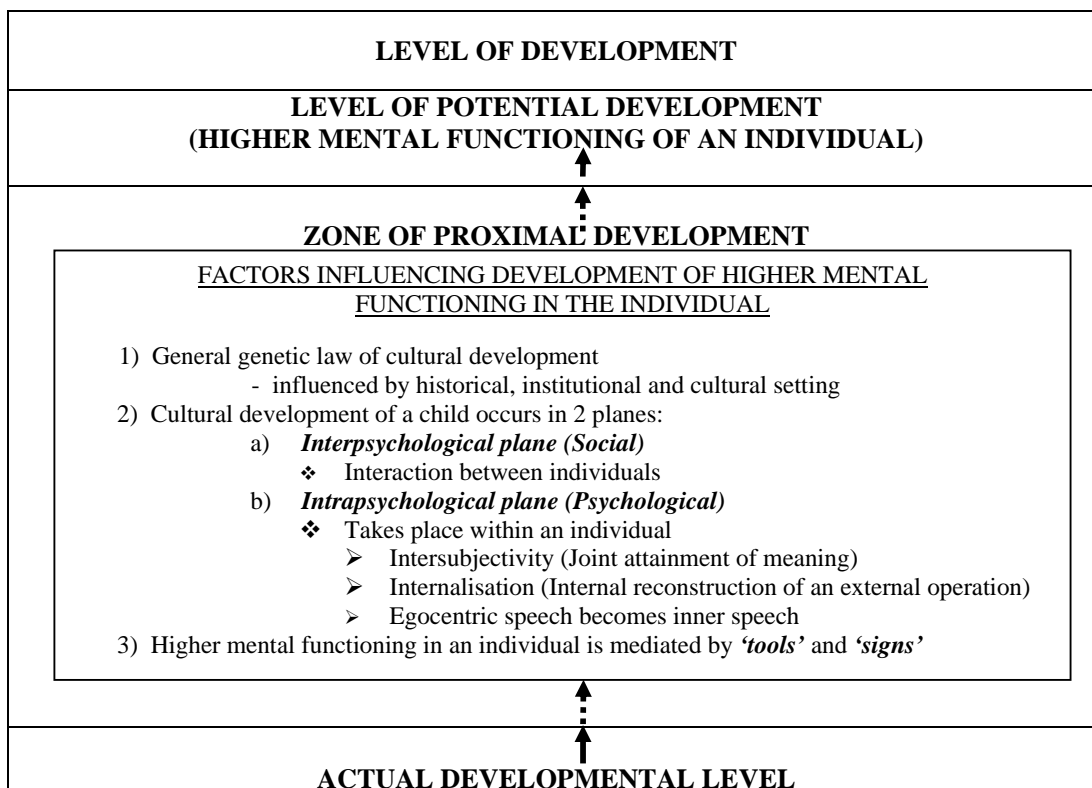
#### **1.6 Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical framework of this current study is based on Vygotsky's theory of learning. With regard to the collaborative role between the teacher, students and their peers, Vygotsky (1978) perceived that with guidance from adult or more capable peers, a child would be able to function beyond his or her current developmental level. After



he or she has internalised the necessary skills in writing through collaborative effort and guidance, he or she would be able to perform at a higher level on his or her own. “The distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers” is termed as the ‘Zone of Proximal Development’ (ZPD) (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86). The concept of ZPD consists of functions which are still in the ‘embryonic state’ like ‘buds’ or ‘flowers’ waiting to be matured through social interaction (Vygotsky, 1978). This is shown in Figure 1 below which depicts Vygotsky’s (1978) theoretical framework of learning.

**Figure 1**  
**Vygotsky’s (1978) Theoretical Framework of Learning**



Source: Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological process*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Key:

- Indicates the level of development  
 .....→ Indicates development within the zone of proximal development

As portrayed in Figure 1, Vygotsky's (1978) theory of social construction of learning concerns three basic themes (a reliance of the general genetic law of cultural development, the claim that higher mental functioning in an individual has its origins in social activity, and the claim that human activity on the social and psychological planes is mediated by tools and signs). Vygotsky's general genetic law of cultural development posits that the development of higher mental functioning in an individual is influenced by the historical, institutional, and cultural setting (Davydov, 1995; Moll, 1990; Wertsch, 1990; Wertsch, 1991). This tenet of Vygotsky corroborates with Bruffee's (1999) view that a child "however poorly prepared academically, did not come to us as blank slates ... [but is] already deeply acculturated, ...[a] competent member (as we were, too) of some community or other" (p. 4-5). This view implies that in the context of the writing class, any child would have some form of writing skills which he or she may have acquired from other social context; therefore, it is the job of the teacher and educators to find out how to develop the writing skills of the child through 'reacculturation' and assimilation to fit into the present new social setting. One way to 'reacculturate' the child is by involving the child in social interaction with the teacher and peers to assist the child to reflect upon his or her prior knowledge and to discover meanings in his or her writing.

Vygotsky's second claim is that the higher mental functioning in an individual has its origins in social life. Vygotsky (1978) defined the higher mental functioning of an individual as the formation of "voluntary attention, logical memory, and the formation of concepts" (p. 57) which leads to more abstract thought and self-controlled actions (Vygotsky, 1986). He maintained that the cultural development of a child occurs in two planes: the first is the social plane, followed by the psychological plane. In other words, Vygotsky (1978) viewed the social construction of learning to begin from the 'interpsychological plane' (between individuals) to the 'intrapsychological plane'

(within an individual). He held that there is a relationship between the social and the internal activity and his main concern is how the internal mental processes are created as a result of external guidance (Wertsch, 1985). Vygotsky (1978) emphasised that individual consciousness is the result of the collective activity of people. Learning is the result of mediation through interaction between teacher and learner, and between learners. During interaction, learners are actively engaged in exploring, discovering and constructing meaning from new information by reflecting upon their prior knowledge and experience. The role of the teacher is to direct, facilitate or coach, and guide the child's activity in order to lead to development (Davydov, 1995). In other words, throughout the entire learning process, the learners play an active role in self-assessment rather than depending on the traditional teacher evaluation of the end-products (Alesandrini & Larson, 2002). Thus, influenced by Vygotsky's deep concern in this area, the present study focuses on investigating how learning occurs as a result of mediation through interactions between the teacher and students and between the students within the target group to assist student writers to improve their revisions.

In this connection, Vygotsky (1978, 1986) also claimed that there is a close relationship between instruction and development. Collaboration with adult or more capable peers will lead to development provided that the interaction is within the learner's ZPD (Tudge, 1990). This means that the "zone of proximal development is jointly determined by the child's level of development and the form of instruction involved" (Wertsch, 1985, p. 70-71). In other words, the child's development is closely related to the instruction received from the teacher. Cazden (1994) mentioned that teacher instructions have an influence in students' writing during the journey of externalizing the internalised. She equated the influence of teacher instructions on students' writing as "the wind that puts into motion the cloud that gushes a shower of words" (Vygotsky, 1962, p. 150). Therefore, this implies the importance of the role of

the teacher in giving effective instruction to guide the students in the writing classroom. However, the instruction received needs to be in advance of development in order to lead to a higher mental functioning of the learners (Vygotsky, 1978, 1986).

The third basic theme that is central to Vygotsky's theory of learning is his claim that the higher mental functioning in an individual is mediated by tools (or "technical tools") and signs (or "psychological tools") which help to shape and define the human activity (Wertsch, 1990; Wertsch, 1991). Speech acts as the sign system in human communication to connect with the social and individual activity. This means that through collaboration with adults or more skilled peers, a child learns to self-regulate by the use of speech. Vygotsky (1986) explained that the egocentric speech which includes "collective monologues, echolalia, repetition, and comments about his or her own thoughts or actions" (p. 174) is crucial for a child's development as it serves as the transmitter for communicative speech to become speech-for-oneself (inner speech). When encountered with a challenging task, the inner speech will re-emerge as private speech (inner dialogue) to help learner self-regulate and gain control of the problem-solving task at hand. This perception is unlike Piaget's view of egocentric speech as a reflection of a child's underlying egocentricity (Wertsch, 1991). Vygotsky viewed thought and language as two different but unique cognitive operations that "develop in an intertwining pattern, each reinforcing and changing the other as the development proceeds" (Schinke-Llano, 1993; p. 122). In other words, language acts as a powerful tool that ensures socially created and shared meanings (Tudge, 1990).

In the classroom context, speech can act as the tool to mediate the learning of writing. Through speech and collaboration between teacher, students and peers, students can discuss, negotiate and clear their doubts about a writing task. As they are engaged in this collaborative dialogue and negotiation of meaning, their thoughts will develop and eventually become inner speech. This will consequently lead to

internalisation of the rules and concepts learnt; and hence, they can apply this understanding and self-regulate their own composing process. However, it must be noted here that peer interaction may not necessarily accelerate development as it differs according to situations. This point is also stressed by Vygotsky (1978, 1986) in that social interaction may enhance learning or that it may lead to regression.

Bakhtin's sociocultural approach to mind is an extension of Vygotsky's notion of semiotic mediation as the former emphasised the importance of "utterance, voice, social speech type and dialogue" (Wertsch, 1990; p. 119) to link the institutional, historical and cultural factors to the mental functioning of an individual. This view posits that the active dialogic contact of two or more voices will lead to the creation of meaning. An utterance develops through "ventriloquation", a process in which one appropriates another person's voice and uses it as his or her own (Bakhtin, 1981). This is closely related to Vygotsky's (1986) phenomenon of inner speech in which he held that sense precedes meaning. The sense of a word is influenced and transformed as it enters the intralinguistic context. In other words, an individual has the potential to transform the rules and concepts learnt through interaction at the "interpsychological plane" as there is never an exact transfer of knowledge from the social to the psychological plane. This occurs when a state of joint attainment of meaning (also known as 'intersubjectivity') is achieved between the speaker and learner which Vygotsky stressed will foster development within an individual learner. This joint attainment of meaning is revealed in the findings of a study done by McCarthy (1994).

McCarthy (1994) investigated how intersubjectivity, internalisation and internally persuasive discourse worked within a classroom context. Her subjects comprised one experienced elementary teacher and six public elementary school students of diverse cultural background. In this study, McCarthy (1994) reported on four out of the six cases. Findings in this study revealed that three of the four students attained

intersubjectivity and internalisation as their values seemed to fit those of the teacher. This is evident in the use of imagery and figurative language in composing their descriptive essays as taught by the teacher. In other words, shared meaning and understanding existed between these three students and the teacher, and they worked collaboratively to meet the social norm of the classroom. Besides, these three students showed that they have internalised the cognitive and social norms of the classroom as they were able to share and apply what they have learnt in class with the younger students during the writing conferences. However, a mismatch of values occurred with one student in this study as the student was reluctant to write on the topic which the teacher suggested. This is because the topic that the teacher suggested was inappropriate in the student's view due to the painful experience she had encountered with her father. This finding concurs with Vygotsky's perception that the development of higher mental functioning in an individual is influenced by the historical, institutional, and cultural setting (Davydov, 1995; Moll, 1990; Wertsch, 1990; Wertsch, 1991). Thus, this study implies that teachers not only need to be aware of the diverse background and experiences of their students, but they also need to negotiate the values and norms of writing with their students so that learning would be more meaningful.

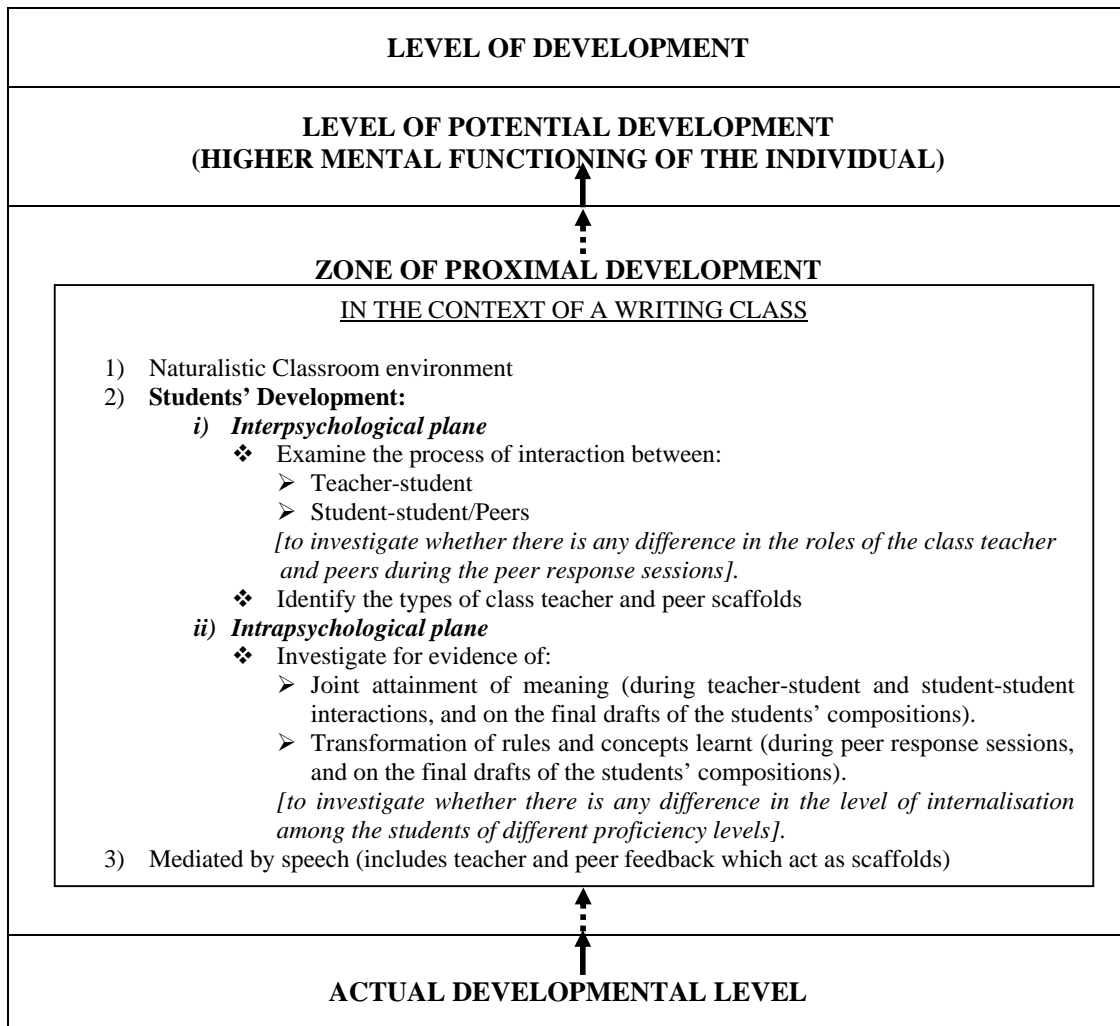
In summary, writing is a highly complex activity which involves cognitive process. As such, teacher-student and student-student interactions will provide the social context for learning to write. In view of this, Vygotsky's (1978) theory of learning supports this call as the collective activity of people will assist students to sharpen and develop their writing skills. Through a review of the related literature, it is found that a number of studies that adopted Vygotsky's theory of learning have centered on the role of adults in fostering children's development (e.g. Cumming & So, 1996; McCarthy, 1994; Patthey-Chavez, Matsumura & Valdés, 2004; Samuel, 1992; Wertsch, 1985), and the role of students during peer interaction (e.g. Berg, 1999; Carson & Nelson, 1996;

Connor & Asenavage, 1994; De Guerrero & Villamil, 1994, 2000; Denyer & LaFleur, 2001; DiPardo & Freedman, 1988; George, 1984; Hittleman, 1983; McGroarty & Zhu, 1997; Nelson & Murphy, 1992; Villamil & De Guerrero, 1996) but few research have looked into the process of both the teacher-student and student-student interactions in facilitating collaborative writing which is the focus of this present study.

This present study applied the three basic themes in Vygotsky's (1978) theory of learning to the teaching and learning of writing. The three basic themes that were emphasised in this present study include Vygotsky's (1978) claim that learning is influenced by the general genetic law of cultural development, the claim that the higher mental functioning in an individual has its origins in social activity, and the claim that human activity on the social and psychological planes is mediated by tools and signs. This study was carried out in a naturalistic classroom environment with the purpose as outlined in Section 1.4.

Figure 2 on the following page shows the conceptual framework of this present study which is based on Vygotsky's (1978) theory of learning. By investigating the process of teacher-student and student-student interactions in an authentic classroom environment, the researcher aims to explore whether learning has taken place from the social to the psychological planes; whether the students have attained intersubjectivity and internalisation; and whether there is any difference between the roles of the class teacher and peers during the peer response sessions in assisting students in their revisions. Besides, this study aims to identify the types of scaffolds employed by the class teacher and peers during the teacher-student and student-student interaction sessions; and to examine how students revise the first drafts of their compositions based on the class teacher and peer feedback. This study also aims to determine whether there is any transformation of rules and concepts learnt on the final drafts of the students' compositions; and to investigate whether there is any difference in

**Figure 2**  
**Conceptual Framework of Current Study**



Adapted from: Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological process*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Key:



Indicates the level of development

Indicates development within the zone of proximal development

the level of internalisation among the students of different proficiency levels.

In conclusion, it is hoped that the findings in this present study will throw more light on the distinction between the roles of the class teacher and peers in contributing towards an effective peer response session to assist student writers to improve in their revisions. This will help ESL teachers to better equip themselves and to seek for appropriate strategies to train students in providing feedback to help student writers to



improve in their revisions. Besides, by examining and understanding the differences in the level of internalisation among the students of different proficiency levels, educators can plan on how to cater to the needs of students of different proficiency levels to help develop their writing skills so that eventually they would be able to function at a higher level on their own.

### **1.7 Significance of the Study**

The findings in this study add to the burgeoning body of research on the roles of the class teacher and peers during peer response sessions in facilitating learning and developing the learners' writing skills. It helps educators to have a better understanding of the similarities and differences in the roles of the class teacher and peers during peer response sessions in a writing class, as well as to have a better knowledge of how social interaction shapes intellectual development. In knowing the difference between the roles of the class teacher and peers, ESL teachers can plan appropriate strategies to better equip themselves and to train students on how to work effectively in peer response groups to assist their group members to become better writers. In other words, instead of clinging to the centre stage in the traditional 'teacher-centred approach' to learning, ESL teachers need to recognise the importance of the role of peers in the 'student-centred approach' to learning. This is because the 'student-centred approach' to learning will enhance students' social skills through peer interaction and sharing of ideas. This, in turn will provide students the opportunity to voice out their ideas freely, help their group members and to make decisions on their own. On the other hand, the workload of ESL teachers can also be reduced and instead, they can act as coaches or facilitators and collaborators to guide their student writers during the learning process.

Besides, the findings in this study may influence policy makers and ESL teachers to consider the use of this teacher and peer response approach as one of the ways to obtain

better academic achievements. By understanding the process of collaboration through teacher-student and student-student interactions, educators will know how learning progresses from the 'interpsychological plane' to the 'intrapsychological plane' which is the focus of Vygotsky's (1978) theory of learning. In other words, educators will be able to gain a better understanding as to the individual differences in internalisation, and how students work within their zone of proximal development. By knowing the pattern of development of ideas and the different levels of internalisation among students of different proficiency through teacher-student and student-student interactions, it will help educators to plan appropriate groupings to cater to the needs of students of different proficiency levels to help develop their writing skills. With this help, students would eventually be able to function at a higher level on their own.

In addition, the findings in this present study is significant as the peer scaffolds and class teacher scaffolds provided during the student-student and teacher-student interactions as well as through written form helped to bridge the students' current developmental progress to a higher cognitive level of thinking which improves their revisions and enhances their writing skills. Thus, by knowing the types of effective class teacher and peer scaffolds, educators will be able to provide better guidance to student writers to help them develop their writing skills. This indicates that with proper guidance from adults or more capable peers, ESL student novices can learn to be experts and thereby, to perform on their own beyond their 'zone of proximal development'. This is in accordance with Vygotsky's (1978) theory of learning that with the guidance from adults or more knowledgeable peers, a learner will be able to function beyond his or her current developmental level; and eventually, will be able to operate at a higher level on his or her own.

Other than that, peer feedback was found to play an important role which complements the class teacher feedback in aiding ESL students' learning. Hence, this

shows that learners need experts as intellectual mentors, but engagement with peers of the same social status provides the context for shared understanding which is also essential to enhance learning and the mastery of the writing skills.

Moreover, the findings in this study help to enlighten educators on how students revise the first drafts of their compositions based on the class teacher and peer feedback. From the revisions made by the students, educators will know whether internalisation has taken place and how students transform the rules and concepts learnt to the writing tasks at hand. The knowledge gained from this finding will help educators to provide useful feedback and guidance; as well as to train students to provide useful feedback to help their peers improve their revisions.

To add to this, the findings in this study may make educators to be aware of the benefits of using the 'process approach' instead of the 'product approach' to teach writing. This is because writing is a process of the discovery of meaning through the revision of drafts. In this regard, educators need to be aware that peers can also play a vital role in giving response during peer interaction to help their group members improve their revisions.

Furthermore, the findings in this study may influence teachers of other disciplines to undertake the same collaborative teacher and peer learning approach to help students to have a better understanding of the subjects which are taught in the English Language as well as to better express their ideas in both oral and written forms.

This study will also benefit the society as the teacher and peer response approach to learning will help to produce students who will be able to work together and even apply the collaborative learning skills that they have learnt in their writing classroom to other social context.

## **1.8 Definition of Terms**

### **1.8.1 Process Approach**

The process approach to writing is defined as the process of working through more than one draft to “discover new ideas and new language forms” (Raimes, 1983, p. 11). In this present study, the process approach to writing involves the writing of two drafts (first draft and final draft) by each individual student for each of the four writing tasks given by the teacher.

This approach to writing includes pre-writing, composing and revising the text concerned. In the pre-writing stage, the students will work collaboratively through interaction with their group members to generate ideas, and share knowledge and experience on a given writing task. In the composing stage, the students will write their own individual first draft of the composition based on their understanding and discussion with their peers on the writing task given. In the revision stage, the writer rewrites or reviews his or her first draft based on the class teacher and peer feedback given during the peer response session. In other words, according to Elbow (1981, p. 140), revision is to ‘resee’ the first draft of a piece of writing in a better perspective by getting feedback through interaction with others.

### **1.8.2 Peer Response Group**

According to DiPardo and Freedman (1988), in peer response group, “the group members work in turn with different individuals on their individually owned products” (p. 120). Peer response group in this present study refers to a group of students working collaboratively through teacher-student and student-student interactions to provide responses or feedback to their group members to help improve the individual first draft of their compositions.

### **1.8.3 Collaboration**

According to Bruffee (1999), collaboration in the classroom refers to a group of learners “negotiating among themselves what they think and know in order to arrive at some kind of consensus or agreement” (p. 21). In this present study, the term collaboration refers to the act of working together with peers to generate ideas and exchange information on a given writing task during the pre-writing and composing stage; and check for clarity, coherence and cohesion of a text as well as the correct usage of surface features during the revision stage. In other words, the students in this study will work collaboratively through interactions with the class teacher and peers to produce their own individual first drafts and final drafts based on four writing tasks given by the class teacher.

### **1.8.4 Class Teacher and Peer Feedback**

Feedback according to Keh (1990) is defined as “input from a reader to a writer with the effect of providing information to a writer for revision” (p. 294). The terms ‘class teacher feedback’ or ‘class teacher response’ and ‘peer feedback’ or ‘peer response’ as used in this present study refer to the class teacher and peer verbal comments (during the teacher-student and student-student interactions) and written comments (written on the first drafts of the students’ compositions).

### **1.8.5 Scaffolds**

According to Cazden (1988), the term ‘scaffold’ is defined as “support that is both adjustable and temporary” (p. 107) given to a learner to assist him or her to perform a given task. This definition of the term ‘scaffold’ will be adopted in this present study.