THE EFFECTS OF COLLABORATIVE VERSUS INDIVIDUAL WRITING ON FLUENCY, COMPLEXITY AND ACCURACY AMONG REFUGEE LEARNERS

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DISSERTATION SUBMITTED IN FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE

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Field of Study: Language Learning and Assessments

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ABSTRACT

Researchers are focusing more on the writing component especially on the impact of collaborative writing tasks on writing performances as compared to individual writing tasks. The study is grounded on Vygotsky's sociocultural theory of mind (1978) that posits social interactions among learners are important for the "input" in second language learning. In pursuit of having a new perspective in types of suitable assessments for writing in the educational system for learners, it is important to identify and assess the needs of learners from marginalized backgrounds that have been deprived of basic education. Refugee children and children of asylum seekers in countries of first asylum like Malaysia often face difficulties in having quality education and their education needs are a challenge among researchers and education practitioners. The aims of the study are to compare collaborative and individual writting tasks in order to identify the differences in the level of fluency, complexity and accuracy, to explore the effectiveness of collaborative and individual writing tasks on the writing performances, followed by to examine the focus of language related episodes (LREs) among paired learners and finally on the learners' approach towards the writing tasks. This study will provide an insight to educators handling the education of refugee learners with potential new ideas to enhance learners' writing skills and assist them to prepare effective writing tasks for their learners. The findings of the study showed that collaborative writing tasks have positive effect on the accuracy of written texts produced. However, collaboratively written texts were relatively shorter in length and disorganized in terms of ideas and supporting details. Meanwhile, the collaborative dialogue provided a platform for learners to discuss, contribute inputs, give opinions and correctly resolve the utterances for a better writing output, as evident in the language related episodes (LREs). The present study suggests that teachers and

administrators to spend some time teaching students the concept of collaboration and the benefits of learning together before giving them collaborative writing tasks.

Keywords: *Individual writing, collaborative writing, Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, language related episodes (LREs), Refugees, Countries of first asylum,*

ABSTRAK

Para penyelidik sedang memberikan tumpuan yang lebih kepada komponen penulisan khususnya terhadap impak penulisan secara kolaboratif berbanding dengan penulisan secara individu. Kajian ini adalah berdasarkan teori sosiokultur Vygotsky (1978) di mana interaksi sosial di kalangan pelajar adalah penting untuk mendapatkan "input" dalam pembelajaran bahasa kedua. Dalam mengejar perspektif baru untuk jenis-jenis penilaian yang sesuai untuk penulisan dalam sistem pendidikan untuk para pelajar, ia juga menjadi sangat penting untuk mengenal pasti dan menilai keperluan pelajar-pelajar dari latar belakang yang terpinggir daripada pendidikan asas. Kanak-kanak pelarian dan kanak-kanak pencari suaka di negara-negara perlindungan pertama seperti Malaysia sering menghadapi kesulitan dalam memperoleh pendidikan yang sesuai dan keperluan pendidikan mereka merupakan satu cabaran di kalangan penyelidik dan pengamal pendidikan.Tujuan kajian ini adalah untuk membandingkan tugasan penulisan secara berpasangan dan individu untuk mengenal pasti perbezaan dalam tahap kefasihan, kerumitan, ketepatan, untuk menerokai keberkesanan penulisan secara individu dan kolaboratif terhadap kecekapan bertulis , untuk memeriksa episod-episod bahasa yang berkaitan di kalangan pelajar berpasangan dan diikuti pendekatan pelajar dalam tugasan penulisan. Kajian ini akan memberikan satu gambaran kepada para pendidik yang mengendalikan pendidikan pelajar pelarian dengan potensi idea-idea baru dalam meningkatkan kemahiran menulis serta membantu mereka menyediakan tugas-tugas penulisan yang berkesan untuk pelajar pelarian mereka. Keputusan kajian menunjukkan bahawa tugasan penulisan secara kolaboratif mempunyai impak positif terhadap tahap ketepatan dalam teks penulisan. Namun, teks bertulis kolaboratif agak pendek dan idea-idea serta butiran sokongan tidak teratur. Sementara itu, dialog kolaboratif memberikan satu platfom untuk para pelajar berbincang, menyumbangkan input, memberikan pendapat serta membetulkan ucapan-ucapan untuk "output" yang lebih baik, seperti

mana yang dibuktikan dalam episod-episod bahasa. Kajian ini mencadangkan guru-guru dan pentadbir untuk meluangkan lebih masa dalam mengajar para pelajar mengenai konsep kolaboratif dan kebaikan belajar bersama-sama sebelum memberikan mereka tugasan penulisan secara kolaboratif.

Kata kunci: *Penulisan secara Individu, Penulisan secara Kolaboratif, Teori Sosiokultur Vygosky, Episod-episod bahasa yang berkaitan (LREs), Pelarian, Negara-negara perlindungan pertama*

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LIST OF SYMBOLS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ANOVA	:	Analysis of Variance
CAF	:	Complexity Accuracy Fluency
CEFR	:	Common European Framework of References
CLC	:	Community Learning Center
CG	:	Collaborative Good
CS	:	Collaborative Satisfactory
CW	:	Collaborative Weak
IE	:	Individual Excellent
IS	:	Individual Satisfactory
IW	:	Individual Weak
L1	:	First Language
L2	:	Second Language
LEP SIFE	:	Limited English Proficient Students with Interrupted Formal Education
LRE	:	Language Related Episodes
F-LREs	:	Form-focused Language Related Episodes
L-LREs	:	Lexis-focused Language Related Episodes
M-LREs	:	Mechanics-focused Language Related Episodes
MMAR	:	Mixed-Methods Action Research
NGO	:	Non-Governmental Organizations
SLA	:	Second Language Acquisition
PT3	:	*Pentaksiran Tingkatan Tiga*
UNHCR	:	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	:	United Nations Children's Fund
ZPD	:	Zone of Proximal Development

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1. Introduction

In recent years, with the proliferation of education, classrooms around the globe have become more progressively diverse in terms of cultural and linguistic aspects. Researchers in the area of language learning and teaching have become increasingly aware of the various difficulties faced by students with limited language literacy. Records have shown that vast majority of refugee students with interrupted schooling have entered mainstream schools in the United States, Canada and Australia (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2014). When resettled, the refugee students are integrated into American public domain schools swiftly where the environment is rich in learning opportunities and are deemed as safe havens (Naidoo, 2010). However, these students experience profound difficulties in achieving academic success for various reasons and language has been identified as the main source of problem (Mcbrien, 2005; Rutter, 2006). According to Hakuta, Butler & de Witt (2000), it has been estimated that in optimal situations, a learner will take three to five years to develop speaking skills and four to seven years to obtain academic proficiency in English.

Nevertheless, these estimations may take longer for students with interrupted schooling and students with disadvantaged learning backgrounds, with studies pointing out that it might take up to ten years to gain English academic proficiency (Garcia, 2000). Moreover, refugee students with interrupted schooling do not possess the background knowledge of academic subjects, genres and registers to scaffold and process content (Carrasquillo & Rodriguez, 2002). For example, it is pointless to ask a refugee student who has spent the last ten years in a refugee camp in Sudan to write about a trip to the shopping mall. Their academic successes are often impaired because

of the gaps in formal education or devastatingly, no education at all (Bigelow, 2010). The United Nations High Commissioner of Refugee (UNHCR) in its *Refugee Education: A Global Review* (Dryden-Peterson, 2011) publication has mentioned that access to education is very limited and the quality of education available is mostly low for refugees in asylum countries before they resettle.

While there is a transparent recognition of the diversity in education and social needs of refugee learners, previous researches have highlighted that dealing with the needs of these learners create tough pedagogical predicaments for language educators. These learners struggle with academic expectations of the school and often times only have resources that are unsuitable for limited proficient learners (Miller, Mitchell & Brown, 2005). Isik-Ercan (2012) also agreed that the education of refugee students is an arduous process for both language educators and researchers. By understanding how refugee learners view the language-learning process, a teacher will be able to identify the needs that contradict on what is being currently perceived by the language educators and change those perceptions to suit the current needs of the refugee learners. For example, Thorstensson (2013) discovered that one of her participants described herself as, " *I try hard but I don't understand my teacher (s). I feel dumb. Teachers like me because I am quiet, but they don't like me because I don't speak English."*

This is an 11-year-old Vietnamese girl who had no prior formal education and does not know how to read and write in Vietnamese as well. Due to having no prior formal education, this Vietnamese refugee student is one of the many more refugees who could not read and write proficiently in their first language. In Australian education context, she has been categorized as *Limited English Proficient Student with Interrupted Formal Education* (LEP SIFE). Thorstensson (2013) wanted to interrogate the notion of "*smartness*" among refugee students and their expectations in school. In this era, Thorstensson mentioned that "*smartness*" is being measured on the level of one's

performances in tests and this could very much affect how refugee students view themselves in schools. Furthermore, opportunities to attend schools in countries like the United States and Australia can be very promising in terms of intellectual, linguistic and social gains. However, many of them still grapple with the horrifying trauma in their countries of origin or asylum, while being linguistically marginalized in resettled countries (Anderson, 2004 as cited in Thorstensson, 2013). MacNevin (2012) noted that teachers are not requisite enough to address the academic needs of low literacy refugee students and in the author's research, MacNevin had teachers' reports, stating that they have no professional training on how to educate these students to manage academically, followed by a severe lack of suitable age appropriate learning materials and lack of knowledge on early literacy development (MacNevin, 2012).

In this research, I adopted the working research term "*Limited English Proficient Students with Interrupted Formal Education (LEP SIFE)*" from refugee background for the participants in this study. The New York State Education Department (NYSED, 2011, p2), in a summarized version, states that SIFE with LEP as " *students that come from countries where there was no formal education, have entered new and different cultures and lack full range of socio-academic and cultural competencies expected in US schools.*" In this context, I sought to investigate the suitable learning and teaching approach that can be used by teachers of LEP SIFE in countries of first asylum and countries of resettlement to build language and literacy. The following sub-section will discuss on the background of the study, where I sought to examine the educational experiences of refugee students in a country of first asylum (Malaysia).

1.1.1. Background: Refugee Students Learning English in Malaysia

The study will focus on refugee learners from the Chin ethnicity in Malaysia. The Chin refugees are the largest refugee group in Malaysia. They frequently live in calamitous poverty and severely cramped flats in Kuala Lumpur and several other

locations outside the city. According to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) report in 2015, in the past, access to Malaysian state schools were given to refugee children but that access was restrained until 1995, when the federal government started imposing annual fees exclusively for students from foreign descents. The sudden imposition of the school annual fees did not stop the refugee children from attending state schools, but it was the implementation of valid birth certification for every school attendees that led to a massive decline in enrollment.

Many refugee children do not have birth certificates for various reasons and the only option was to enroll in informal community learning centers (CLCs) that provide parallel education system. Refugee CLCs are managed by refugees themselves and funded fully or partially by individuals and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) with the support of UNHCR. Previous studies and literature on the educational experiences of refugee learners often focus on post-resettlement learning experiences in United States or Australia, with little attention being given on the learning experiences obtained during pre-resettlement period in first asylum countries such as Malaysia, Kenya and Pakistan. It is important to note that prior educational experiences or pre-resettlement learning experiences have an adequate amount of consequences for post-resettlement educational experiences (Dryden-Peterson, 2015).

To begin with, I first came across refugee CLCs as an intern with the Education unit in UNHCR Malaysia in 2012. My main tasks were to conduct weekly visits to gauge the state of several centers with a comprehensive checklist, conduct inspection interviews with the principals and teachers respectively and deliver reading materials sponsored by UNHCR. The centers are mostly located in cramped shop lots with deep harrowing steep stairs and deserted houses that remained unostentatious. In 2015, I started to research about the English language literacy among the refugee students and began my journey as a volunteer teacher at a center that uses an abandoned bungalow to

accommodate more than a hundred refugee students located at *Jalan Imbi*, Kuala Lumpur. Many kind-hearted Malaysians, expatriates and volunteers from local and abroad dedicate their time to teach in this center. Refugee learners in Malaysia are exposed to varieties of English as they have teachers from different nationalities. These refugee learners are learning English in Malaysia while simultaneously adapting to a new environment. In addition, when compared to Malaysian students learning English in state schools, refugee students face the added challenge of learning English in which the variety of English they learn in this country of first asylum may not be the same as the variety of English they will encounter in a post-resettlement country. However, many volunteers do not come in as qualified trained teachers and refugee CLCs do not follow a regular or systematic curriculum. Their lessons depend entirely on the teacher. Unfortunately, volunteer teachers do not stay for a long period of time and many classes are either disbanded or handed over to new teachers who come along. Hence, many learners face disruptions and very likely never progress to the next level. Moreover, these students are usually older than their enrollment grade and some 13-15 year olds are placed in Primary One and these learners can barely even hold a pencil to write properly. In some unrecorded cases, there are incidents where these older refugee learners have opted to dropout from learning centers due to low self-esteem and embarrassment from having to study with younger learners.

In addition, refugee students are relatively exposed to limited forms of academic language, format and content. When prompted, most of them are skilled enough to follow instructions and write narrations regarding their daily conduct and encounters, but scarcely any of them are capable to produce essays that are compatible with academic standards. With refugee CLCs relying heavily on the teachings of religion as to alleviate pain and miseries, many of the students could only go as far as producing English essays that are heavily concentrated on religious context. As a teacher, I listen

to the concerns of these refugee learners and try to understand their needs in learning. Many of them are unaware of a proper school setting as I listen to questions like: " *What is essay? ". " Why do I have to learn to write? ". " What is exam?" and " Why must I complete this task? "*. From listening to the students' questions, it is very visible that language is not only acquired through experiences, but is also based on learners' attitude and motivation. In fact, according to Gardner (1985), there is a direct relationship between attitude and motivation in language learning. Gardner's (1985) socio-educational model is designed in relation to social factors involved in second language acquisition. For instance, the model acknowledges the role of external influences (instrumental motivation) in L2 learning, such as the desire to learn a second language for achievements, or the need (integrative motivation) to learn a second language in order to integrate into a community. Gardner's (1985) instrumental and integrative motivation is based on the social circumstances of learning a second language and the author believed that language learning might develop if there are positive context and approach towards it.

Furthermore, many of the students that I have taught are unaware of school routines. Freebody, Maton & Martin (2008) also noted similar situations, where refugee students have had no opportunities to experience school working concepts, social and cultural undertakings, develop metacognitive skills and in addition to subjects' prior knowledge. Refugee learners are also exposed to multiple languages and environments over the course of migration and asylum seeking period. This happens when refugee children who often follow their parents to seek refuge in more than one or two countries and eventually been staying over a period of time, may lead to the child being confused over the usage of language and face limited opportunities to properly acquire and learn a language over time. This also inhibits the refugee child to master academic language and content during migration period (Dryden-Peterson, 2015). Without exposures to

learning methods and quality education experiences, refugee students will not be able to engage fully in the learning process and this may lead to more compounded difficulties. Examining their concerns will allow teachers to better understand refugee students and make practical changes that can help them to cope with the difficulties and understand the importance of learning a language.

Many people view writing as extremely challenging and tedious, but many failed to see how writing could be used as a form of therapeutic healing. Refugee students may shy away from speaking for fear of not being understood but they can benefit tremendously by expressing their thoughts and feelings on to a paper. Louise DeSalvo (2000), author of *Writing as a Way of Healing: How Telling Our Stories Transforms Our Lives*, wrote the book based on a study conducted by James W. Pennebaker. In Pennebaker's (2004), study, students who fought with inner demons wrote 20 minutes daily and 4 months later they experienced astonishing liberation from their past traumas. As the idiom goes, a pen is mightier than a sword. With this powerful life-changing tool, I want to focus on one aspect of literacy development, which is writing. I would want to know in particular the effectiveness of a proposed writing approach and strategies that could go a long way to assist teachers of LEP SIFE and the students themselves. In particular, I would like to focus on how different forms of writing instructions can affect learners' performances.

1.2 The Teaching of Writing

The development of writing would differ between groups of learners based on their proficiency level. In 2006, Carnegie Corporation New York, an American based foundation aiming at promoting " *the advancement and diffusion of knowledge and understanding"* appointed two researchers to study on effective writing instructions for young adolescent supported by valid scientific research. Their research identified eleven practices that can be used in classrooms to improve writing, specifically "*Writing*

Strategies, Summarizations, Collaborative Writing, Specific Product Goals, Word Processing, Sentence Combining, Prewriting, Inquiry Activities, Process Writing Approach, Study of Models and Writing for Content Learning" (Graham & Perin, 2007b, p3).

Graham & Perin (2007b) proceeded to conduct a survey to find out which strategy has been highly used in twelve American school districts and the survey results revealed that *Prewriting* strategy, where students engage in activities to generate ideas and text organizations, was the widely used one (100%). *Sentence Combining* and *Process Writing* strategies came in next (75%). In this survey, Graham and Perin (2007b) disclosed that *Collaborative Writing, Inquiry Activities* and *Study of Models* strategies were the least preferred, where less than five schools actually use them. This indicates that the classroom learning environments are compounded by traditional culture and this could well hinder the rise of 21st century writers. The authors emphasized that there should be more usage of mentor texts as models, increase the use of writing for content and consider implementing peer feedback and response groups in a collaborative context.

Furthermore, writing has been generally perceived as an isolated, solitary and individual activity (Montero, 2005; McDonough, 2004). Isolated writing activities restrict students from interacting with one another and students work individually to finish their pieces (Montero, 2005). However, more and more researchers are encouraging the process of viewing writing as a joint activity in order to promote interaction-learning style in writing. According to Storch (2011), collaborative writing is " *the joint production of a text or the co-authoring of a text by two or more writers*". While problems have arose from joint activities such as non-equal contributions in a work, there are benefits in terms of preparing learners to the types of work that awaits them in the workforce (Strauss & U, 2007). However the implications of having

collaborative kind of assessments in classrooms among learners, especially in written texts are rare. Nevertheless, researchers are focusing more on the effects of collaborative writing on language performances as compared to individual writing, as they believe that collaborative-based writing tasks have more positive outcome as compared to individual writing tasks (Wigglesworth & Storch, 2009).

Moreover, the present settings of classrooms do not encourage social interactions. In Malaysian schools, *Prewriting* strategy is also widely used and there is a common practice where writing task will always be given at the end of a lesson or topic. By then, the teacher would have covered the reading, speaking and listening components in the particular chapter and assumes that students would have enough knowledge to scaffold in their essays with similar themes. Nevertheless, with *Prewriting* strategies, students may still struggle as to how to generate ideas for a topic and the organization of text because the process of how to do so would have been neglected in the first place (Chen, 2002).

Hence, in pursuit of having a new perspective in handling writing skills and the learning issues faced by the refugees, this study aims to investigate the types of tasks, either collaborative or individual, that can assist to enhance writing skills. Dryden-Peterson (2015) also mentioned that the educational needs of refugee learners, based on their prior educational experiences must be carefully addressed and identified. Thus, their needs should not be confused with any innate inabilities to learn. This study will empower the refugee learners and educators, transform them and provide them with new understandings regarding the different types of writing tasks. It will be useful for educators especially to implement either more individual or collaborative writing sessions in classrooms.

1.3 Statement of Problem

In conducting a literature search on refugee students learning English, it was found that there is an insufficient data particularly involving refugees in Malaysia, given the fact that Malaysia is the country of first asylum for many refugees from Myanmar. Furthermore, in Kuala Lumpur, there are 73 refugee CLCs registered with the UNHCR and only 28% of 21, 880 school age going students have access to education (UNHCR, 2017). Since the data is not adequate enough on how these students are performing in local refugee CLCs and how they view the language-learning process in general, there could be many underlying issues that educators and researchers are not aware of.

Furthermore, teachers and administrators handling refugee students may not be able to relate to their experiences, linguistics and social cultural background. By having a good grasp of the situation and identifying the needs in language learning, teachers will be able to attend to the needs of these students. Better instructions and approaches can be delivered and students will have positive English learning experiences, both inside and outside of the classroom. Aside from this, since writing is seen as a form of therapeutic healing for students struggling with a traumatic past, a suitable approach is needed to guide them to write. However many teachers are reluctant to implement collaborative writing task in their classrooms (McDonough, 2004). This is because of the perception that writing is an individual act and that most writing assessments tend to measure only individual performances. There are also possibilities that some teachers are aware of the potential benefits of collaborative writing tasks and how to implement such activities in the classroom. Moreover, many collaborative versus individual writing studies have been conducted on students who have been through formal education without any interruptions and have academic writing skills in general (Dobao, 2012; Wigglesworth & Storch, 2009).

Moreover, most of the literature is centered on the educational experiences and English learning process of refugee students in a resettled country. Because there are limited literature on the educational experiences of refugee learners in countries of first asylum, a study on the English language learning process among these students in Malaysia will have implications not only for teachers who are teaching refugee students in countries of first asylum, but will also benefit teachers and administrators handling them in a resettled country.

The research context of this study serves to fill in the gaps for the educational experiences of LEP SIFE from refugee background in countries of first asylum like Malaysia, and in addition to provide more data on collaborative and individual writing tasks.

1.4 Objectives of the Study

The study aimed to identify the types of tasks; either collaborative task or individual task that can assist limited English proficient students with interrupted formal education (LEP SIFE) from refugee background to enhance their writing skills. In addition, the study will explore the writing performances, the language related episodes (LREs), which are based on specific discussions that have taken place during the collaborative writing session and the overall approach towards writing. The objectives of the study are to:

1) To compare collaborative and individual written tasks in order to identify the differences in terms of fluency, complexity and accuracy among refugee learners.

2) To explore the effectiveness of collaborative and individual writing tasks on the writing performances of refugee learners.

3) To examine the focus of language related episodes (LREs) among the paired refugee learners during composing.

4) To investigate the refugee learners' approach towards the writing tasks.

1.4. 1 Research Questions

In order to accomplish the objectives of the study, four research questions were formulated. With these research questions, the focus of the research will be towards the effectiveness of collaborative and individual writing tasks, followed by language related episodes (LREs). The research questions are listed as below:

1) What are the differences in terms of fluency, complexity and accuracy between the collaborative and individual writing tasks?

2) What are the effects of collaborative and individual writing tasks on the writing performances of the refugee learners?

3) What is the main focus of the language related episodes (LREs) among the paired refugee learners during composing?

4) How do the refugee learners approach the writing tasks?

The research questions aim to serve as a blueprint to find out the effectiveness of collaborative and individual writing tasks. Although similar studies have been conducted, the significance of this study lies in a different L2 proficiency context from existing literature, which are the effects of collaborative versus individual writing tasks on limited English proficient students with interrupted formal education (LEP SIFE) from refugee background.

1.5 Significance of Study

Refugees have been in Malaysia since 1970 and the Vietnamese refugees are the first to arrive to seek shelter at our shores in *Pulau Bidong*. After the Vietnamese, it was the Filipinos, Cambodians, Bosnians and the largest arrivals till date, the Burmese refugees (UNHCR, 2005). Tracing back to 1970's, Malaysia is no stranger to having refugees around and they make up a large part of the demographic in the sub-urban of Kuala Lumpur. These refugees are able to communicate in various languages, even in limited *Bahasa Malaysia*, Mandarin Chinese, Cantonese and English. Although not

fluent, at least they have the ability to communicate daily in a country that still sees them as " *illegal migrant"*, even with a valid UNHCR refugee identification card. Because they are considered as illegal under Malaysia Immigration Act, refugees are not allowed to enter workforce and study in governmental institutions.

One does wonder how these refugees have learned to speak, or maybe read and write when they are only allowed to receive education in refugee CLCs. This provides an interesting opportunity to study how refugees in Malaysia learn English when English is not a native language of this country. English as a Second Language studies in Malaysia have largely focused on Malaysian students and International students. The data collected from this study can directly benefit researchers who wish to investigate refugees learning English in Malaysia, especially in writing. This study would also be valuable to volunteer teachers teaching in refugee CLCs and teachers who are presently teaching refugee students in resettled countries.

This study provides a platform to shed light on collaborative versus individual writing tasks in a different L2 context, since the study aimed to examine the effectiveness of two different writing tasks on the fluency, complexity and accuracy among refugee learners with interrupted schooling. In addition, the quality of the writing produced needs to be investigated, with respect to the grades obtained by the pairs and individuals (Wigglesworth& Storch, 2009). The data collected could highlight the issues and specific problems that learners face during the implementation of such activities. The semi-structured interview was designed to gauge the beliefs and perceptions of these learners when it comes to writing. This study could address some of the misconceptions that teachers have regarding implementing writing sessions in classrooms.

There is also paucity in literature looking at the patterns of interactions during collaborative writing tasks. The patterns of interactions among the members of the

group may range from being passionate, dominant, and passive or no interactions at all. In fact, Storch (2001) identified four types of patterns of interactions: collaborative, expert/novice, dominant/dominant, and dominant/passive. Many factors could contribute to the types of interactions produced and one of the factors is the proficiency level. Learners may engage in a passionate discussion, or the high interlocutor may interfere and dominate while the low interlocutors remain passive (Storch, 2013). Meanwhile, Lin & Maarof (2013) mentioned that while discussing, learners may sometimes refrain themselves from offering further opinions or engage in an argumentative conversation as to not offend their partners. In this study, the participants have limited proficiency and their patterns of interactions need to be examined. The findings from this study can contribute to the existing literature in terms of the nature of collaboration among learners with limited English proficiency. In sum, the study intends to contribute to the understanding of individual and collaborative writing tasks and shed new light on the patterns of interactions in a different L2 context.

1.6 Definitions of Terms

The following sub-sections will discuss the operational terms used in this study. The definitions of terms represent the proper concepts and the designations of each of the terminology used in this study. It is important that the nature of the terminologies is properly implied in order to have a better understanding of the study.

1.6.1 Refugees

The term "refugees" are to be applied to any person who owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to

return to it (Refugee Council UK, 2017, Article 1 of United Nations 1951 Refugee Convention, amended in 1967 Protocol).

1.6. 2 Asylum Seekers

A person who has left their country of origin and formally applied for asylum in another country but whose application has not yet been concluded (Refugee Council UK, 2017).

1.6.3 Country of First Asylum

First asylum country refers to the country that permits refugees to enter its territory for purposes of providing asylum temporarily, pending eventual repatriation or resettlement. It can be provided locally or in a third country. Usually, first asylum countries obtain the assistance of United Nations High Commissioner (UNHCR) to provide basic assistance to the refugees (USLegal, 2016). Malaysia is a country of first asylum for many Myanmar refugees.

1.6.4 Collaborative Writing

Collaborative writing is the joint production of the co-authoring of a text by two or more writers. The defining trait of collaborative writing is the joint ownership of the document produced. It is distinguished from the group-planning or peer-feedback activities that are often a part of writing instructions (Storch, 2011).

1.6.5 Fluency

Fluency refers to the production of language in real time without undue pausing or hesitation (Ellis & Barkhuizen, 2005, p.139).

1.6.6 Complexity

Complexity refers to the extent to which learners produce elaborated language (Ellis & Barkhuizen, 2005, p.139).

1.6.7 Accuracy

Accuracy refers to how well the target language is produced in relation to the rule system of the target language (Skehan 1996b: 23 as cited in Ellis & Barkhuizen, 2005, p. 139).

1.6.8 Language Related Episodes (LREs)

According to Swain and Lapkin (1998), language related episodes (LREs) involve the extraction of specific discussions on the language used. During these episodes, learners speak about the language that they are using and also tend to discuss the accurateness of the language produced. In other words, learners will discuss and correct one another. LREs can be categorized into three types of focus, Lexis-focus (L-LRE) where learners search for suitable words, Form-focus (F-LRE) where learners look upon morphology (word forms) and syntax (sentence forms) and finally Mechanics-focus (M-LRE), where learners focus more on the spellings and punctuations (Wigglesworth & Storch, 2009).

1.7 Scope and Limitations of the Study

This study that examined the effects of collaborative versus individual tasks on writing performances involved a small group of participants from one refugee community school in Kuala Lumpur. The sample population consists of 45 children of refugees and asylum seekers, and the study only dealt in depth with students from the Chin ethnic in Myanmar. Hence, the findings of this study cannot be generalized to other refugees of different nationalities and ethnicities.

Another limitation of the study is that the students have a limited knowledge of academic language, format and content. Although a PT3 marking scheme was used to analyze the qualities of the compositions written, the writings produced cannot be compared with compositions produced by mainstream schools. Nevertheless, the sample compositions collected were aligned with the topic given and the semi-structured interviews enabled further analysis of the data. Besides that, The L1 translations for the

language related episodes (LREs) were based entirely on a Burmese native speaker and not a fully certified interpreter. The availability of a Burmese certified interpreter was not possible for this study. In such situations, with due respect, there is always the risk of recordings not being translated in an adequate manner. However, the L1 translations were satisfactory enough for the qualitative analysis.

1.8 Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the background, the statement of problem and the significance of research. In addition, the objectives and the research questions were listed for a better understanding of the purpose of study. Finally, definitions of terms and the limitations were presented and discussed in the introductory chapter. The following chapters are organized in sequence of: Chapter Two discusses the theoretical framework and the literatures pertaining to the study. Next, Chapter Three discusses the methodology used and the flow of it in this research, including research design and instruments, participants, data analysis methods and the rationales. Chapter Four will focus on the data analysis, including the quality of the compositions produced, quantitative results of fluency, complexity and accuracy, qualitative analysis of language related episodes (LREs) and the discussion of the semi-structured interviews. In addition, the chapter will discuss the key findings and answer the research questions. Finally in the last chapter, Chapter Five, the implications of the study and recommendations for future research will be provided.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2. 1 Introduction

As described in the previous chapter, the objectives of this study are to examine the effects of individual and collaborative tasks on the fluency, complexity and the accuracy of the written texts produced, as well as the language related episodes (LREs) between the pairs as they discuss throughout the writing process. Building on these objectives, the study is guided by existing literature comparing the writing performances of a group of limited English Proficient students with interrupted formal education from refugee background, with two different writing approaches. The notions that the social interactions between second language learners facilitate better cognitive abilities and the joint mental activities between learners forge new and creative ideas (Mitchell, Myles, & Marsden, 2013), have prompted investigations to be done in this study with learners from different L2 context.

This chapter presents the theoretical framework of this research and review of the literature pertaining to the philosophies and perspectives held by researchers applying sociocultural theory on L2 learning. To begin with, the review explains the nature of second language writing processes, concerns and writing measures as an introduction. The review then proceeds to summarize the theoretical underpinnings on language learning, with a specific discussion on Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory of mind. This is followed by a summary on the development of writing approaches used to determine the effects of measures in this study. Within the writing approaches, the summary also moves on to cover the factors affecting peer collaboration. The literature review also included related existing literature which is pertinent to the study, both in Malaysian and international context in order to contextualize this present research. After the reviews on the effects of peer collaboration and writing approaches, the literature

review continues to discuss the final aspect of this study, language related episodes (LREs). Since the nature of oral interactions involves effective interpersonal communication skills, an overview of communicative functions is provided. Last but not least, the identified gaps in the existing literature are addressed and specified in order to explain the significance of this study.

2.2 Second Language (L2) Writing

Writing requires pertinent effort and considerable practice in planning, composing, developing and organizing ideas. According to Omaggio Hardley (1993), prolific writing is not a naturally acquired skill; rather it is learned from formal educational settings or culturally diffused through social environments. With this, writing skills need to be learned and practiced through experiences. In fact, writing through experiences echoes the ability to reiterate the information into narrations and subsequently transform the narrations into a written text. In the process of writing, generating ideas in the composing stage could be reckoned as the most difficult phase for most students. According to Becker (2006), novice writers rarely pay attention to detailed planning before writing and revising throughout the writing task, as compared to expert writers. As a matter of fact, formulating new ideas can be excruciatingly arduous to those writing in a second language context. This is because the process of transforming and revising the information tend to be more complex in writing as compared to spoken. Given the complexity in writing, writing scholars have spent more than twenty years analyzing the writing process through various writing models. In 1980, Linda Flowers and John Hayes created a model that included cognitive actions that reflected on the thought process during writing. The authors examined and rework their initial model and later on introduced a newly improvised model (as illustrated in Figure 2.1) that included a more effective revision phase. Flower & Hayes (1981) divided their model into three main components: the task environment, the writer's

long-term memory and the writing process. In the writing process stage, the planning, translating and reviewing phases are controlled by a monitor function that can also access the knowledge of topic, audience and writing plans from the writer's long-term memory.
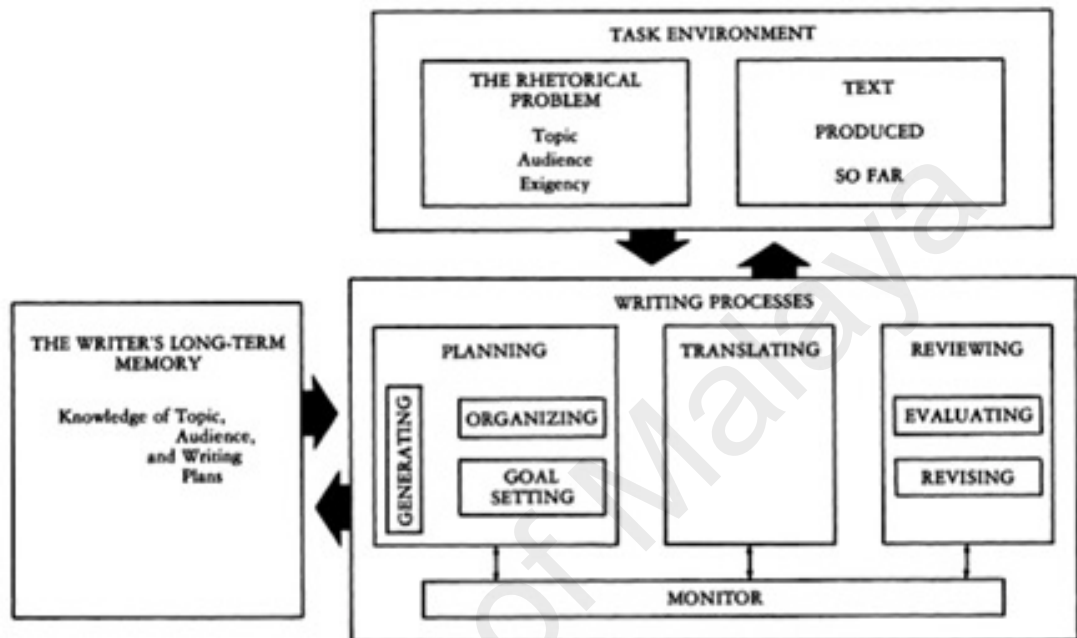
Figure 2.1 Flower and Hayes' (1981) model

Following this, Carl Bereiter and Marlene Scardamalia expanded Flower and Hayes' (1981) model and refined a knowledge-transforming model of writing in 1987 (as illustrated in Figure 2.2). Bereiter & Scardamalia (1987) proposed that when composing, writers tend to engage in two-way interactions while developing knowledge and developing text simultaneously. To be precise, while generating ideas during composing, learners resolve both content and rhetorical problems, which call upon a more reflective problem analysis and goal settings. Indeed, the process of planning, composing, developing and organizing ideas requires conscious efforts for second language writers, as their proficiency levels in the target language also play a major role in determining the writing output. Furthermore, aside from adequate proficiency level, learners writing in their second language undeniably need to master the writing

strategies, techniques and skills. The lack in those elements may contribute to these learners facing instructors or administrators that might not be able to proceed beyond the language issues when assessing their written texts.
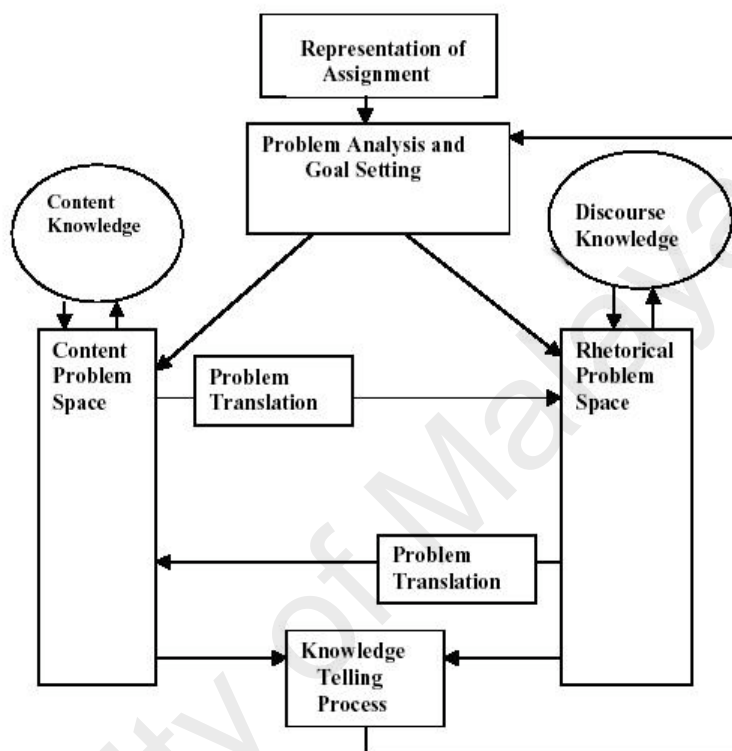
Figure 2.2 Bereiter & Scardamalia's (1987) Knowledge Transforming Model of Writing

Bereiter & Scardamalia (1987) mentioned that proper organization at text and sentence levels leads to effective representation of meanings, which contributes to the quality of the written text. Additionally, the authors explained that the lack of knowledge on how to process relevant information and organize text is due to coherence issues. Generally during construction phase, writers process their information, which include the ideas, goals and organizations into meaningful sentences. This is followed by the revision stage where learners re-evaluate and implement modifications to the writing plan. However the authors mentioned that not only would coherence level interfere with the construction phase, but also the revision stage would be equally difficult for second language writers. This is due to the fact that the task definition,

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evaluation and modifications have to be reconsidered in the original written text, and learners also need to have the ability to analyze and evaluate any feedbacks. As a result, writing instructions should include the stimuli from numerous educational, social and cultural experiences that the students have experienced. Existing literature has stated that the stimuli ought to embrace the knowledge of appropriate genres (Connor, 1997) and familiarity with the writing topics (Shen, 1989).

In second language writing, language transfer is another instance that would normally occur in the process of transforming information. Ellis (1994) stated that language transfer is the direct influence of native language or any other languages that shares similarities with the written context in L2. Certain behaviorist have strongly claimed that language transfer is the main cause of errors in second language written text as some of the transformation may not have been done in an accurate way. However according to Ellis (1994), language transfer from native or any other languages is resourceful as learners would actively participate in interlanguage development. The author reaffirmed that language transfer can directly stimulate the hypotheses that learners have constructed through interlanguage development. Moreover, Wigglesworth & Storch (2009) have stated that L1 has several ranges of functions and usually learners deliberate over the input and decision-making processes in L1.

To address writing concerns, numerous researchers have suggested methods on writing instructions in L2 classrooms such as having students to write collaboratively as compared to writing individually (Dobao, 2012; Wigglesworth & Storch, 2003, 2009). In fact, writing in pairs and groups has been supported theoretically and pedagogically by psycholinguistics and in sociocultural perspectives. The theoretical and pedagogical rationale of peer collaboration, followed by the nature of collaborative writing tasks will be presented in the next subsequent sections. In this present study, the aim is to

investigate the types of writing tasks, either individual or collaborative work that can address the writing concerns in L2 classrooms. In this study, the majority of the refugee students do not possess academic writing skills and their purposes of learning to write in second language do not resonate with the purposes set by the current academic world. Kutz, Groden & Zamel (1993) noted that the nature of academic literacy and standards often than not confuses students, especially to those who are in "odds" with the academic world that they are about to encounter. Furthermore, the nature of schemata that derives from cultural upbringings denotes our knowledge of occasions, occurrences and specific happenings and reaffirms our minds intellectually. However, the nature of schemata may lead to difficulties in writing if the knowledge obtained is not sufficient enough for administrating information. For example, it is noted that refugee learners are not able to relate or compose narratives that are beyond their surroundings due to the circumstances that they live in. One of the prominent issues is the transition required when entering into the academic world, where refugee learners need to learn on how to maneuver successfully in academic writing that commands knowledge of textual convention, standard expressions and formulaic organizations. Specifically in this context, I sought to examine the writing concerns of limited English proficient students with interrupted formal education from refugee background, who in this modern day still struggle to comprehend and acknowledge the nature of academic literacy and standards. The following sub-section will elaborate on the writing measures for L2 performances.

2.2.1 Complexity, Accuracy and Fluency in Second Language Writing

To elicit second language performances, applied linguists in the field of second language research (SLA) have proposed three linguistic features on examining the language elaborations and the quality of language produced, namely complexity, accuracy and fluency-CAF (Housen & Kuiken, 2009). In second language acquisition,

CAF has been used to comprehend the outcomes of written and spoken performances, based on the types of instructions and tasks (Biber & Gray, 2010). According to Wigglesworth & Storch (2009), there is a rise on the research for CAF in writing, and the investigations on the types of tasks is necessary as studies have shown that task types do affect CAF. The effects of tasks on written performances of second language can shed light on the common metrics used in the field of SLA (Biber & Gray, 2010). Furthermore, in this present study, the three linguistics features in the writing performances will be explored more in terms of task types (individual and collaborative writing tasks) in order to examine how different types of task reflect on learners' CAF.

In the analysis for CAF in language development and quality of language produce, these linguistic features are considered to be complex and multidimensional (Housen & Kuiken, 2009). In the research for second language acquisition (SLA), different researchers tend to use different linguistic measures, hence making the comparison for language performances difficult and inconsistent (Ellis & Barkhuizen, 2005). According to Housen & Kuiken (2009), CAF measures have been considered to be multidimensional because the measures are holistic in terms of having frequencies, ratios and formulas to evaluate three different types of language domains. Most significantly, researchers using proper measures to look into language development are able to discern the learning experiences and results consistently, which can then be appropriately decoded and linked to the theoretical aspects of the situation (Norris & Ortega, 2009). Furthermore, the author mentioned that it is important for second language researchers to identify the operational definitions of CAF constructs in the analysis for second language acquisition.

According to Skehan (1998a), second language learners may tend to focus more on the accuracy aspect of the tasks, or sometimes towards the complexity of grammar and forms, or followed by the focus on fluency occasionally. The focus of these learners

depends on the earlier goals that they have set when performing in an L2 task (as cited in Ellis & Barkhuizen, 2005). Housen & Kuiken (2009) mentioned that accuracy is basically an error-free unit in written and spoken discourse and is the most easily defined feature among the triad of CAF. Second language learners who focus more on accuracy tend to seek control over components or parts of speech that they are fully aware of in their interlanguage systems. The familiarity with the parts of speech often than not makes learners to adopt a "conservative stance" towards the usage of L2 (Ellis & Barkhuizen, 2005, p.139). However, Pallotti (2009) argued that researchers tend to focus more on the quantity of accuracy in the production of language, rather than the adequate amount of accomplishments in the task. The author emphasized that assessments in terms of accuracy should be conducted separately from the construct of development. Likewise, Norris & Ortega (2003) cautioned that the accuracy of specific forms would make the evaluation for construct of development more difficult as it is uncertain of which part of the data (grammatical, lexis) should be represented as accurate. However, Norris & Ortega (2003) stated that the basic measure of accuracy is well defined and rational in the construct of language development. In addition, Ellis & Barkhuizen (2005, p.139) noted that in error-free considerations, alternative measures such as the *percentage of error free clauses* or the *number of errors per 100 words* are sufficient enough to provide researchers with measures for learners grammatical and lexical accuracy.

While second language learners tend to seek control over the familiarity of language in terms of accuracy, complexity is based on the learners' motivation to challenge themselves in "experimenting linguistically" (Ellis & Barkhuizen, 2005, p.139). Complexity has been considered to be the extended form of elaborations in language. Skehan (2001) mentioned that elaborated forms in language or complexity can refer to learners being motivated to use language that is not familiar or much more

complex from their interlanguage systems. In other words, the complexity in this context suggests that the learners are mentally prepared or more than willing to explore a variety of structures and use language that are beyond their usual limits (as cited in Ellis & Barkhuizen, 2005). According to Housen, Kuiken & Vedder (2012), complexity can be measured in terms of two major linguistic elements: a) grammatical complexity (syntactical and morphological) and b) lexical complexity. Pallotti (2009) stated that even though complexity is described as the fundamental application of "challenging and more advance language", it is apparent that complexity measures are just an indication of language development and the level of proficiency in second language production. To be precise, the author does not consider complexity as a property of language production. Nevertheless, Norris & Ortega (2009) viewed the measures in complexity as valid for language performances because language complexity can refer to a function of sophistication in the language used.

Finally, Skehan (2001) also mentioned that fluency occurs when second language learners focus more on the negotiations for meaning, rather on form for the completion in written task. In terms of writing fluency, learners are also able to quickly resolve linguistic issues with proper strategies. In addition, the fluency in writing is evaluated through the length of production and the overall amount of units and clauses in a text. The measures for fluency in writing were actually derived from insights based on the existing fluency measures for spoken discourse (Van Waes & Leijten, 2015). According to Ellis & Barkhuizen (2005, p. 140), in spoken discourse, fluency happens when the production of language is completed without hesitations or lengthened pauses. In addition, fluency is measured in variables such as the a) rate of production in speech and b) the number and length of pauses and hesitations. The summary of Skehan's three aspects of task performances is presented in Figure 2.3:

```
                        Task performance
                               │
              ┌────────────────┴────────────────┐
              ▼                                  ▼
          Meaning                              Form
          (fluency)                             │
                            ┌───────────────────┴───────────────────┐
                            ▼                                        ▼
                        Control                              Restructuring
                        (accuracy)                            (complexity)
```
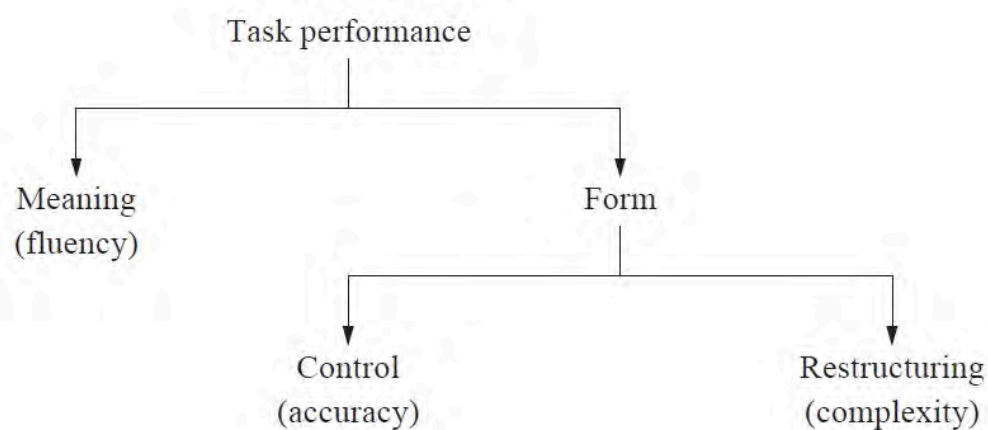
Figure 2.3 Skehan's Three Aspects of Task Performances

In sum, the present study for CAF analysis is extended from existing literature investigating on the effects of different types of instructions and tasks on language development and quality in second language acquisition (SLA). Despite some criticisms on the validity of the linguistic measures in CAF, the measures chosen in this study is based on the holistic approach and the multidimensional functions in these features. Most significantly, the findings obtained from the CAF analysis in this study can be use for detailed comparisons with previous studies and justifications can be provided in terms of language performances and proficiency level.

2.3 Theoretical and Pedagogical Rationale for Peer Collaboration

Peer collaboration is underpinned in Lev Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory of Mind (1978). Peer collaboration is referred to peer-learning environments where learners collaborate face to face, in pairs or groups in order to complete a given task (Webb & Palinscar, 1996). The sociocultural theory of mind accentuates collaborations between language learners and the stresses on the importance communicative functions in L2 development. In fact, the process of interactions among language learners have long been viewed as an important "input" for the outcome of second language learning (Lantolf & Poehner, 2008b). Based on sociocultural perspectives, learning is an activity

that is associated socially and social interaction plays a key role in cognitive development.

According to Vygotsky (1978), who is a pioneer in sociocultural perspectives in second language learning, social based interaction in learning is a type of mediated learning. Most significantly, social based interactions develop higher cognitive functions and every function in the learner's cultural progress would appear twice. First, the higher order functions of cognitive would appear on the social level, followed by on the individual's inter-mental plane (between people) and subsequently on the intramental plane (between oneself). In addition, the author insisted that language learning and acquisition is connected to the development of cognitive functions. To be precise, a learner would begin to communicate with people around them (inter-mental) and later naturally proceeds on to communicate with oneself (intra-mental) to process information and concepts (p. 57). Hence, the communication process between an individual and another involves socializing with each other and this social interaction leads to cognitive development. Vygotsky (1978) proposed that:

> Learning awakens a variety of internal development processes that are able to operate only when a child is interacting with people in his environment and in co-operation with his peers (p. 104)

Likewise, Mitchell, Myles, & Marsden (2013) noted that the mental activities of students rely heavily on how they regulate and mediate their relationships with the people around them by using certain symbolic tools, which is language. These symbolic tools or language that second language learners used while learning are created and influenced by the social culture and environment. Similarly, in a sociocultural perspective, learners are considered to be " active constructors" in their own learning environment. Hence, the learning is considered as a form of socially constructed knowledge, or to be precise, knowledge is social by nature and is constructed through a series of interactions (Vygotsky, 1978).

In Vygotsky's point of view, it is crucial to understand second language learners' social environment and the relationships they share within the social environment that help shape the students' mentalities. Moreover, the author believes that learning is an action that is initiated through activities and the cognitive skills and critical thinking patterns are determined through the activities that are practiced in the social environment. Similarly, Vygotsky developed the notion that there is a limitation in the potential cognitive development in a learner's zone of proximal development (ZPD). According to Briner (1999), ZPD is an explorative area in which the learners are cognitively prepared, however assistance is still needed through social interactions in order to be properly developed. In a simple context, ZPD is considered to be the gap where learners can strive to accomplish more by collaborating with others who share similar experiences or advance knowledge. In sum, it can be said that social and cultural elements influence cognitive development and progress.

In this study, since the development of cognitive and linguistic skills largely depend on the social environment, it has been evident from the start that LEP SIFE from refugee backgrounds may not have such conducive environments to even begin with learning a language. With this, adults in particular play an important role in fostering and nurturing cognitive growth. A teacher, a guardian or a peer is able to provide learners with platforms to engage in meaningful activities that can expand the cognitive growth. On an important note, Vygotsky (1978) mentioned that children are able to develop socially and cognitively if they interact with adults or peers who have advance knowledge as they indulge in meaningful discussions. The interactions can be achieved through collaboration in order to enhance language and knowledge learning. The author emphasized that with the assistance of a teacher or from peers, the learners can benefit tremendously especially towards their constant evolvement in knowledge domains and skills. Hence, the act of collaborating and interacting to gain knowledge is termed as

"collective scaffolding". In addition, writing is an activity that involves several cognitive processes and writing has always been viewed as a solitary activity. However based on Vygotsky's sociocultural perspectives that emphasized on social interactions and communicative approaches, collaborative writing offers low proficient learners opportunities to scaffold and guide each other in the production of a text. Therefore, this study will be based on the premise that social environment can help shape students' cognitive skills and this present study seeks to examine the basis of this theoretical framework on individual and collaborative written tasks. Based on the reasons provided as well, this theory is chosen to be the theoretical framework in the present study.

Moreover, from a theoretical perspective, the use of collaborative work tasks in L2 classrooms is being supported by researchers that posits Vygotsky's original theoretical framework (Batstone, 2010; Dobao, 2012; Garcia Mayo, 2007; Norris & Ortega, 2009; Shehadeh & Coombe, 2010). The learners' (novices) interaction with more capable individuals (experts), gradually initiate the cognitive and linguistic development among the novices with assistance from the experts (Dobao, 2012). Such assistance, or more scientifically known as *scaffolding*, allows learners to expand their current cognitive and linguistic levels to another height and eventually reach to their potential development. Likewise, existing literature have indicated that such kind of assistance, or *scaffolding* does have beneficial impacts on each other's development when working in pairs or among peers (Alegrı´a de la Colina & Garcı´a Mayo, 2007; Donato, 1994; Nassaji & Tian, 2010; Storch, 2002; Ohta, 2001; Wigglesworth & Storch, 2009). As a matter of fact, even when learners are grouped according to similar cognitive and linguistics skills, learners could draw in their own individual strengths to provide scaffold assistance to each other.

Furthermore, jointly performed tasks allowed learners to pool in linguistics resources and resolve linguistic problems that are beyond their capabilities (Ohta,

2001). According to Vygotsky (1978, p.126), interactions among learners would enable the learner to " raise himself to a higher intellectual level of development through collaboration, to move from what he has to what he does not have through imitation". On the pedagogical side, collaborative work enable learners to have more autonomy and self-directed learning approach. For example, there were instances where learners were more than willing to accept their collaboratively constructed knowledge, whether it was accurate or inaccurate (Swain & Lapkin, 1998). This may suggest that there are possibilities that learners do develop trusting bonds with their peers while learning. According to Dillenbourgh (1999), when learners collaborate together, common goals are set and members develop a sense of belonging with one another in order to complete the task. Aside from that, there are possibilities of reducing anxiety level while discussing in pairs, rather than having an entire classroom discussions (Kim & McDonough, 2008). Based on the explanations provided on the theoretical framework, Vygotsky's theory is chosen due to its central claims that through social interactions, learners engage in language-mediated cognitive activities that are believed to assist in the co-construction of knowledge and pooling of linguistic resources to achieve higher performances in L2 learning.

2.4 Collaborative Writing: L2 Learning

Collaborative writing, in a broader perspective, basically refers to the co-authoring of a written text with two or more writers (Storch, 2013). Additionally, prominent writing scholars such as Bruffee (1984) and Graham & Harris (1994) have proposed that all writing activities are considered to be collaborative to a certain extent, including when composing individually. The authors explained that when writing individually, the act of engaging with a reader in mind or seeking for assistance from others during this particular phase is considered to be collaborative by nature. Ede & Lunsford (1990) identified three specific features in collaborative writing, namely a)

substantive interaction in all stages of the writing process, b) shared decision-making power over and responsibility for the text produced and c) the production of a single written document (as cited in Storch, 2013). In sum, collaborative writing is a process where learners work and interact with each other in order to complete a written task. With this, learners also strive to contribute in terms of outline, ideas, deliberate over linguistic features and finally revision. Most significantly, such text is co-owned and writers share similar ownerships for the written output (Storch, 2013).

Numerous studies have examined the effectiveness of collaborative work in terms of spoken context, however the impact of collaborative work on the written discourse is limited (Storch, 2005, Storch & Wigglesworth, 2007; Wigglesworth & Storch, 2009; Storch, 2011). In fact, Storch (2005) mentioned that although collaborative learning tasks are commonly carried out in L2 classrooms, most literature have rarely examined the nature of collaboration when learners jointly produce a written text. Furthermore, Storch (2011) went on to emphasize that the use of collaborative writing tasks in L2 classrooms was relatively unaccounted for, although the usage of collaborative learning approach can be traced back to the 1980s and 1990s. Decades ago, the collaborative learning tasks were guided by Long's (1996) interaction hypothesis and communicative approaches, and most of the pair and group activities employed oral tasks such as information gaps. According to Long (1996), when learners are engaged with their peers or interlocutors while discussing and negotiating meaning around the tasks, the quality of input produced might change. Hence, with more modification within the interaction process, the input becomes clearer and more understandable. Based on Bosworth & Hamilton (1994), collaboration is an intellectual joint effort between teachers and students through a range of learning approaches and strategies. According to Storch (2011), it wasn't until Swain's (1995) study on the

importance of output in the development in L2 that initiated the use of collaborative writing task among pairs and groups in L2 classrooms.

On the other hand, collaborative writing is not exactly a new concept in university settings as compared to L2 classrooms (Strauss, 2001). Generally, collaborative writings in universities are used to mentally prepare and train tertiary students to collaborate and work in groups, as workforces customarily require them to have teamwork qualities. Meanwhile, in normal L2 classroom settings, students are being evaluated as individuals so that their performances can be gauged separately (Wigglesworth & Storch, 2009). Although collaborative writing tasks are well supported theoretically, the attention towards the impacts of collaborative writing task in L2 classrooms may sometimes be disregarded.

On an important note, according to Gass & Mackey (2006), collaborative work often leads to learners engaging in negotiations of meanings and these negotiations promote L2 learning. Weissberg (2006) further supported by mentioning that collaborative writing tasks that generally assimilate speaking and writing are more advantageous to learners in terms of language learning, as compared to writing individually. In fact, by engaging in a joint writing activity, the needs to produce relevant output would encourage learners to process language thoroughly. With this, learners would discuss and reflect on the language used, draw in precise knowledge and work along to resolve linguistics issues (Swain, 1995, 2000; Williams, 2001).

Building on this research, a significant amount of studies in the field of second language acquisition has been focusing on various task designs and their influences on the L2 learning and performances. With this, studies on the effects of collaborative learning on second language acquisition have increased over the years. In fact, a significant number of researchers have mentioned about the positive impacts of collaborative learning on second language learners' performances. From a cognitive

aspect, the studies examined on the fluency, complexity and accuracy of the written texts produced (Ellis, 2003; Dobao, 2012; Garcia Mayo, 2007; Wigglesworth & Storch, 2009). In terms of the influences, some studies investigated on the collaborative dialogue (language related episodes), form and feedbacks (Garcia Mayo, 2007; Kim, 2009). The studies indicated that interactions facilitate critical thinking skills, as learners are able to provide reasoning and make decisions on the process. Likewise, pair and group interactions in collaborative writing tasks assist learners in analyzing and evaluating on each other's ideas and linguistics skills in constructive manner. Other researchers have also emphasized on the effectiveness of collaborative writing as their findings revealed that collaborative writing have produced effective written works as compared to individual writing tasks (McDonough, 2004). The author stated that due to the joint efforts, learners were able to contribute creative ideas and assist one another to improve the level of text complexity, language fluency and accuracy in the writings produced (McDonough, 2004).

However, Storch (2011, p. 275) argued " although pair and group work are commonly used in language classrooms, very few studies have investigated the nature of such collaboration when students produce a jointly written text." With this, Storch pointed out that the majority of past studies have focused on the results of learners' performances in collaborative spoken activities, rather than the performances in written activities. In a series of studies, Storch & Wigglesworth (2007, 2009) compared the language performances of learners in individual and collaborative writing tasks at a tertiary level, and additionally examined the types of processes that were involved during the paired writing sessions. Storch & Wigglesworth (2007) compared two types of written texts, a report and an argumentative essay produced by 24 individuals and 24 pairs with advanced learners in English proficiency. The findings showed that there were no significant differences in terms of fluency and complexity for both groups, but

there were significant differences in terms of accuracy as the paired performed better. Wigglesworth and Storch (2009) conducted yet another study with foreign students in Australia that have standard university entrance proficiency level in English. The authors found similar results where collaborative writing's impact on the accuracy level for pairs is better as compared to individual writing performances. Meanwhile, Dobao (2012) conducted a study to examine how the number of learners in a task may affect the language production and development in Spanish as a foreign language. Dobao's participants were native English speakers that have intermediate level of proficiency in Spanish. As a result, Dobao's (2012) study on the individual, pair and group writing tasks showed similar findings with Wigglesworth and Storch's (2007, 2009) studies, where there was a positive increase in the level of accuracy for the paired and group work. According to the author, this could be due to the fact that discussions and decision-making processes that occurred among the pairs and group members led to mistakes being resolved in an accurate manner. Wigglesworth & Storch (2009) further supported this statement when they mentioned that collaborative writing tasks encourage learners to maximize their linguistic resources when solving problems. On the other hand, Shehadeh (2011) conducted a study on low proficient students in English and the findings from his study showed that collaborative writing tasks had better effects on the area of content, organization and lexical choices. These views were in line with Vygotsky's theory (1978) that knowledge and language are social and constructed through a series of interactions. Based on the review and findings from existing literature, I formed another sub-section to further discuss the factors that can affect collaborative writing tasks, in terms of roles, problems encountered and proficiency level.

2.4.1 Factors affecting Collaborative Writing

There are some issues with peer collaboration that are certain in L2 writing context. The issues in the peer collaboration group interactions can arose from several factors such as the differences in cultural and educational backgrounds. Multicultural peer collaboration groups may result in conflicts between shared ideologies on common grounds or even cause maximum discomfort between group members (Hyland & Hyland, 2006). According to Nelson & Murphy (1993), members in multicultural groups would have variances in terms of the roles of each member, the operating system of the group and the strategies involve in interpersonal communication skills. Most significantly, those disparities may hinder the group members from receiving the suggestions from their peers and ultimately reaching an agreement on the information. However, according to the authors, the conflicts among group members could be resolved if they are willing to collaborate in order to make the necessary amendments. On the other hand, if the group members refuse to collaborate and instead become more defensive on the receiving ends, the conflicts may be unresolved. In this study, the refugee learners share similar cultural and educational backgrounds. Although the issues mentioned in the multicultural group may be due to the differences in cultural upbringings and spoken language, the disparities mentioned could also occur among learners with similar backgrounds. Conflicts in roles, interpersonal communication skills and ideas can affect learners from similar cultural and educational backgrounds.

Although the peer collaboration interactions tend to focus more on the negotiation of meanings between a competent peer and a learner, Gass (1997) mentioned that the interactions between learners with similar proficiency level in L2 could produce comparable effects on language productions. According to Storch (2013), the importance of negative feedback has been highlighted in Long's (1996) hypothesis for second language acquisition. The negative feedback, provided during discussions,

has been suggested as the alternative to allow learners to pool in their linguistic resources to fill in the gaps in their L2 knowledge. Storch (2013) provided examples, such as negative feedback in the form of clarifications when certain information is not being delivered in a comprehendible manner. In addition, the process of reformulating incorrect utterances is considered to be a modified method of negative feedbacks. In fact, the process of reformulating incorrect utterances is indeed a negotiation of form. To be precise, negative feedbacks that occur during interactions could lead learners to second language acquisition. However, such instances can only happen if the learners are mentally equipped to accept the negative feedbacks and integrate those feedbacks into outputs (Swain, 1993 as cited in Storch, 2013). This is because some learners may be more unresponsive towards critical comments and could behave defensively on the negative feedbacks provided by their peers. On an important note as well, limited proficient learners may only be capable of correcting errors that occurred on the surface as they might have difficulties in identifying the problems of meanings. Although the feedbacks are valuable and important in second language acquisition, the possibility for misleading advices from inexperienced L2 learners is high indeed.

Lin & Maarof (2013) conducted a study on learners' perceptions and problems in collaborative writing approach. The study, which was conducted on 30 Malaysian ESL students in a tertiary level, revealed that the majority of participants had positive perceptions towards collaborative writing tasks. The findings from the questionnaires and interviews showed that in terms of motivation, participants felt that their confidence level to write in English have increased tremendously with collaborative writing tasks. Most significantly, the participants agreed that collaborative writing tasks allowed them to discuss ideas, grammar, vocabulary, sentence structures and spellings effectively in the target language. With this, the participants also mentioned that collaborative writing seem to have a positive impact on the accuracy of their written texts, especially in terms

of grammar. Similarly, Yong's (2006) research on the nature and dynamics of collaborative writing among Malaysian tertiary students revealed that most participants were self-confident during the collaborative writing sessions. During discussions, Yong (2006) suggested that collaborative tasks encourage learners to support each other and this supportive nature tend to foster "camaraderie". However, despite the positive perceptions on collaborative writing tasks, Lin & Maarof (2013) indicated that due to lack of English proficiency, many of the participants found that language factor played a huge obstruction in the discussion process. Likewise, Yong (2006) stated that the lack in English proficiency might hinder participants from expressing their opinions and feedbacks effectively. In addition, some participants chose not to engage deeply into the conversation and offered limited opinions as to not offend their partners (Lin & Maarof, 2013). On an important note, it is a traditional belief that language learners must be taught and given individual tasks so that they can develop writing skills independently and be academically competitive. Thus, these kind of individual learning concepts do exist in the current language learning classrooms. Furthermore, in a conventional classroom setting, the lack of opportunities to interact is causing students to have poor interaction skills. Some of these students find it difficult and awkward to engage in any type of conversations with their teachers and peers, as there is still some existence of social and cultural inhibitions where students are not supposed to speak in class or disagree with the teacher. These social and cultural inhibitions could potentially disrupt the process of interactions among students (Yong, 2006). The problems deriving from the lack of proficiency in the target language and the unwillingness to offer opinions and feedbacks during collaborative writing were recorded in Storch's (2005) study as well.

With a comprehensive understanding of second language writing, collaborative writing and the factors affecting the nature of collaboration, the following section will continue to review the collaborative dialogue in detail.

2.5 Language Related Episodes (LREs)

Peer to peer interactions serve as a platform for collaborative dialogue to occur during collaborative learning and writing session. To be precise, collaborative dialogue is a speech that is directed to others when learners attempt to resolve complex tasks by verbalizing the issues (Swain & Lapkin, 2001, 2002). There are evidences that the dialogue that occurs between the pairs or groups while discussing do facilitate second language learning (Storch, 2002; Swain & Lapkin, 1998). During collaborative dialogue, Swain (2000) noted that when learners are given a collaborative task to complete, they share equal responsibilities for the written output and seek for solutions pertaining to their task. In collaborative writing, the need to produce a written text together requires learners to reach to a mutual consensus through collaborative dialogue. In addition, while working together to complete the task, learners engage in cognitive activities such as creating and analyzing hypotheses, constructing and recommending new ideas, evaluating relevant information and resolving incorrect utterances for a better output. Most significantly, Swain (2006) foregrounded that the concept of using language as a cognitive tool to analyze any concurrent linguistic problems and issues connected to the output is termed as "languaging". In fact, language as an instrument to facilitate cognitive skills is a key concept in sociocultural theory of mind, which suggest knowledge is acquired through language (Storch, 2013). In second language learning, languaging happens when learners seek to comprehend linguistics aspects (grammar, forms, lexis) and decide on modes to generate outputs (information and ideas). This is the distinctive role of language in collaborative dialogue and second language learning. The term "languaging" is the course of using language as

a mean to process complex information, and according to Swain (2006), "languaging" is defined as:

> The process of making meaning and shaping knowledge and experience through language (p.89)

A number of existing literature (Dobao, 2012; Wigglesworth & Storch, 2009) that outlined this approach has investigated the collaborative dialogue between second language learners in terms of language related episodes (LREs). Language related episodes are examples of languaging that occur during collaborative dialogue. An LRE is a section in the collaborative dialogue where learners contemplate about issues related to language, and according to Swain & Lapkin (1998), LREs are defined as:

> LREs are any part of a dialogue where the students talk about the language they are producing, question their language use, or correct themselves or others (p.326).

In these episodes, the focus is mainly on the language use and learners tend to deliberate over the grammatical form (morphology, syntax), lexical choices and mechanics (spelling, punctuations) in writing. The outcomes of LREs can be correctly resolved, incorrectly resolved and unresolved at the sentence and discourse levels (Storch, 2013). Below is an example of LREs taken from Storch & Aldosari's (2010, p.369) study, regarding the deliberations over the lexical form with two low proficient students from Arabic backgrounds. The Arabic expressions were translated in bracket:

Example: Lexis-based LRE (Word meaning)

    61 Nabeel: Any exercising…exercising…

    62 Naif: *Leesh* (What do you mean) exercising?

    63 Nabeel: *Tamareen* (Exercise)

    64 Naif: Exercise *tamareen*?

    65 Nabeel: Yeah…

In this LRE, the learners are deliberating over the word form for exercise in English. Naif was not familiar with the expression "exercising" and sought for a clarification from Nabeel (turn 62) in Arabic (L1). Nabeel was then able to explain "Exercise" in Arabic (L1) to Naif and what he meant by the expression "exercising"(turn 63). In this collaborative dialogue, Naif was seen to seek for clarification and Nabeel was able to confirm it. Such is an example of how learners that share the same L1 could possibly benefit from interactions in second language learning. According to Storch & Aldosari (2010), with collaborative dialogue, Naif was able to gain new linguistic knowledge that could be internalized in the future and such occurrences would not have been possible if Naif were to write on his own. This finding coincides with Swain & Lapkin's (1998) notion that learners are able to preserve the new knowledge gained and adopt the language used by others. Likewise, previous studies have shown that analysis for LREs indicated that learners are able to reach correct solutions for grammatical and lexical difficulties by pooling in individual linguistic resources and co-constructing new knowledge (Dobao, 2012; Shehadeh, 2011; Wigglesworth & Storch, 2009).

On the other hand, it is noted that not all LREs can be correctly resolved as some LREs can be incorrectly resolved or unresolved completely. Storch (2013) provided an example of incorrectly resolved LREs, where the learners were not able to accurately resolve the grammatical issue. The example was obtained from Storch's previous study in 2001 with two higher intermediate proficient learners.

Example: Incorrectly-resolved LRE

117 Howard: The majority of Vietnamese Vietnamese…have learnt English before and have English language fluency…above or equal to low. And had is it? We should put had?

118 Sam: Had?

119 Howard: Had, H-A-D?

120 Sam: Yeah

121 Howard: Because it's past

122 Sam: Yeah past

According to Storch (2013), Howard was testing a hypothesis about the usage of past tense (turn 121) and was doubting between the verb *have* and *has* (turn 117), in which he assumed that verb *had* should be the right one. However during the process of deliberating, Howard seek for a confirmation from Sam with the hypothesis (turn 121), who later on coincided with Howard's assumption of the past tense (turn 122). When examined in detail, Sam could be seen to be confused at the beginning with Howard's suggestion (turn 118), as he might not have been clear about the instances of *have* and *had*. Howard then attempted to clear the air by having the verb *had* to be spell out (turn 119). Even though Sam agreed without hesitating, Howard felt the need to justify his choice by suggesting the hypothesis that he knew, which was the appropriate usage of past tense for past events (turn 121). With this, Storch (2013) indicated that Howard's action of justifying the hypothesis is an example of "metalanguage". Nevertheless, despite the deliberations, the grammatical form was incorrectly resolved in this instance as the correct verb should have been *have* instead of *had*.

Storch (2013) went on to suggest that although some LREs may not be correctly resolved or unresolved at all, there have been studies that indicated that most of the LREs are correctly resolved. However the degree of solving varied in terms of variables such as shared L1 and proficiency levels among the learners. Learners that shared the same L1 were seemed to be able to explain word meanings more efficiently when issues relating to lexical choices arose. On the other hand, learners with lower or intermediate proficiency level do focus more on the lexical and grammatical forms, with limited considerations towards mechanics. On the other hand, learners with more advance proficiency level seemed to focus more on the grammatical aspects of language. In the

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course of resolving, advance learners rely more on their previously learnt grammatical rules and trust their intuitions on what sounds more accurate in the output.

On the other hand, based on Storch & Wigglesworth's (2007) study, the findings showed that in terms of LREs, the participants focused more on lexical LREs as compared to grammar-focused LREs. The authors attributed the participants' higher degree of focus on lexical and meaning based focused, rather than on form and mechanics focused LREs could be due to the advanced level of proficiency in English. Likewise, in a subsequent study, Wigglesworth and Storch (2009) mentioned that in terms of LREs, the findings revealed that lexical LREs had the greatest proportion, followed by form and mechanical LREs. The major focus of the foreign students was on the word choices in the lexical LREs, particularly on the nouns and less common nouns. In fact, there was more attentiveness on the lexical LREs as compared to mechanical LREs, as students seem to be paying more concentration in searching for word meanings and alternatives, instead of focusing too much on the grammatical aspects of the text. Yet again, the authors agreed that due to the participants' good command in English, they were inclined to focus less on the form and mechanic aspects. On the other hand, Dobao (2012)'s study on the participants from intermediate level in Spanish as a foreign language showed that the focus was more on lexical and form LREs. In addition there were instances of unresolved form-focused and also incorrectly resolved form-focused LREs. A group of four learners were unable to agree on a term and find a solution, hence resulting in an unresolved situation. Another pair incorrectly used gender nouns and did not realize their mistake as both agreed on the same noun. Dobao (2012) highlighted that these two instances can occur if the learners do not possess the knowledge to the correct linguistic form, even if they were collaborating together.

Meanwhile, the proficiency level in second language has been seen as a factor that can contribute to the quality and quantity of LREs produced. The level of

proficiency not only affects the number of LREs produced, but also on the types of LREs that they focused on and the outcomes of the episodes. In fact, learners with higher proficiency levels tend to engage more in metatalk and provide correct solutions to their linguistic problems during collaborative dialogue as compared to their low proficient counterparts (Amirkhiz et al, 2013). Kim & McDonough (2008) first paired a group of learners with intermediate levels and then paired the same intermediate learners' quantity and types of LREs produced between both sessions. The findings showed that when learners with intermediate levels were paired with advance learners, they produced higher amount of LREs and a greater fraction of the LREs were on lexical items.

2.6 Identified Research Gaps

According to Watson-Gegeo (1992), prior experiences and socio-contextual variables play an important role in interactions among learners. The author emphasized that learning experiences from various institutional settings such as family, school, community and nation do shape learners' interaction patterns. Hence from the review of existing literature, it is evident that different types of tasks, proficiency levels, cultural backgrounds and second language learning histories could produce a total discrepancy in the set of CAF, the quality of the written text and the outcomes of LREs. The current study aims to address the research gaps identified from existing literature. In the present study, I carried out the research based on Wigglesworth & Storch's (2009) study due to its adaptability and versatility in addressing the concerns related to collaborative versus individual writing tasks. The research questions, objectives and methodology were drawn from Wigglesworth & Storch's (2009) research and adapted accordingly to address the present research gaps.

Most significantly, the reviewed literature exhibited a scarcity in the research for low levels of proficiency in writing, especially among Limited English Proficiency

Students with Interrupted Formal Education (LEP SIFE) from refugee backgrounds. As a matter of fact, there are possibilities that the effects of different writing tasks, nature of collaboration and the patterns of interactions could be diverse for learners that have never experienced formal educational instructions and academic standards. With this, the study also attempts to explore the refugee learners' perceptions and issues in writing. In addition, the discrepancies in the educational backgrounds and English learning histories can be obtained from this present study and used to further understand second language acquisition in a different L2 context. On an important note as well, there is paucity in the literature for the effects of individual and collaborative writing tasks among young second language learners in primary (elementary) and secondary (middle/high) schools in Malaysian and international contexts. In fact, the majority of literature is based on tertiary level settings and contexts, which addresses the effects of individual and collaborative writing tasks on adult writers. There are also few studies on the types of relationships learners form during collaborative writing. This present study is necessary to examine the writing performances and the nature of collaboration among young learners based on sociocultural perspectives on second language acquisition (SLA). With this, I intend to explore the learners' approach towards the writing task as well.

On the other hand, I wish to address the current research trends on individual versus collaborative writing tasks. It is apparent that numerous researchers in recent years have supported the implementation of collaborative writing tasks in second language-learning classrooms, stating that collaborative writing is better than individual writing. While collaborative dialogues seem to produce a higher degree of accuracy, there is also evidence that collaborative dialogues have mixed-effects, especially on the grammatical structures produced, suggesting that collaborative writing might not be conducive in some learning (Storch, 2008). Learners seem to focus more on the lexical

aspects of language instead of the grammatical structures. Interestingly, despite the current attention in collaborative writing, many educators are reluctant to implement collaborative writing activities in classrooms due to lack of awareness and guidelines on how to carry out collaborative writing activities effectively (Storch, 2013). Hence, this study is carried out to investigate the growing trends of individual versus collaborative writing effects on writing performances and address the issues that arose from the different types of writing tasks. Most significantly, more research needs to be conducted for a better understanding of the effects of individual and collaborative writing tasks on second language development.

2.7 Conclusion

This chapter has reviewed the theoretical framework relevant to this study as well as the relevant literature pertaining to the study, including CAF (Complexity, Accuracy, Fluency), second language writing, collaborative writing in L2 context and language related episodes (LREs). Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory of mind and Swain's (1998, 2006) works on collaborative dialogues and patterns of interactions, along with the subsequent studies conducted by Storch (2005, 2008, 2011, 2013) on paired writing tasks have prompted numerous studies to be done on the effects of collaborative writing tasks in L2 development. In this study, the contextual approach is based on the studies advocated by second language researchers such as Wigglesworth & Storch (2009) and Dobao (2012) on writing.

While the present study examines the effects of individual and collaborative writing tasks on writing performances of refugee learners, it was rather difficult to find relevant literature on the educational experiences of limited English proficient students with interrupted formal education (LEP SIFE). Hence, only studies that shared certain attributes and contexts with this study were selected for the reviews of literature. With the critical explorations and discussions of literature based on a variety of aspects, the

aims and the significance of the study have been drawn and presented in a transparent manner. The next chapter, Chapter Three will present and discuss the methodology used in this study.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter illustrates the pertinent research designs, the instruments used and the data collection procedures in a detailed manner. At present, the precise methods used in this research were adapted from existing literature. Apart from that, this chapter outlines the research methods used in this study and the rationale behind the selection. Next, the pilot study, the instruments and the demographic information related to this study are described. Finally, this chapter explains the data collection procedures.

This is followed by a detailed description of the International ethical considerations related to refugee studies and the stringent measures taken to protect the integrity of the refugees in this study. As stated in the introductory chapter, the study aims to identify the types of writing tasks; either collaborative writing tasks or individual writing tasks that can assist the limited English proficient students with interrupted formal education (LEP SIFE), from refugee background to enhance their writing skills. The scope of the research is framed by the following research questions: *What are the differences in terms of fluency, complexity and accuracy between the collaborative and individual writing tasks? What are the effects of collaborative and individual writing tasks on the writing performances of the refugee learners? What is the main focus of the Language Related Episodes (LREs) among the paired refugee learners during composing? How do the refugee learners approach the writing tasks?*

To start off the discussions on the research methods, the following section will first describe on the overall research design.

3.2 Research Design

This is an action research study that employed mixed methods applications, otherwise known as mixed methods action research (MMAR). In this section, the action research design will be explained beforehand, followed by the merging of mixed methods applications in the study. To begin with, Mills (2011) stated that action research design is a process of systematic inquiries by teachers or educators to assemble information about their educational settings and gradually improvise their teachings and students' learning. Similarly, to widen this belief, Kemmis and McTaggart (1988) have deemed that action research is a process of collaboration by those who share identical concerns and issues. These researchers have proposed that action research is a:

> form of collective reflective enquiry undertaken by participants in social situations in order to improve the rationality and justice of their own social or educational practices, as well as their understanding of these practices and the situations in which these practices are carried out (Kemmis & McTaggart, p. 6).

According to Creswell (2014), action research is used when there is a distinct educational problem to be solved. Educators adress the issues, collect and analyse data, solicit suitable solutions based on findings and implement the changes to the classroom issues. The positive side of action research is that it allows educators to critically reflect on their classroom practices. Likewise, Mills (2011) also stated that action research allows education practitioners to develop new knowledge and understandings, which enables changes to take place in multiple educational settings. Alternatively, action researchers " *seeks to empower, transform, and emancipate individuals from situations that constrain their self-development and self-determination*" (Creswell, 2014, p. 609).

Mills (2011) proposed two types of action research designs, namely: *Practical action research* and *Participatory action research*. Creswell (2014) explained that the main objective of participatory action research is to improve the lives of others, liberate and create new visions for communities, organizations, youths and ethnic students groups. A participatory action researcher will strive to define the role of the researcher,

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establish contacts, recognise stakeholders, distinguish key figures and paint a pre-existing illustration on the field study (Stringer, 2007). Most significantly, one of the six central features of participatory action research is directly applied to this study. The participatory action research is "*emancipatory in that it helps unshackle people from the constraints of irrational and unjust structures that limit self-development and self-determination*" (Kemmis & McTaggert, 2005; Creswell, 2014, p. 615). This key feature perfectly frame the intent of this study, which is to liberate the refugee learners and the administrators that are taking the initiative to educate, empower and transform refugee lives. Hence, action research was chosen for its nature to enact changes and assist refugee learners to free themselves from the constraints embedded in their language competencies and social environments.

Aside from participatory action research design, this study also adopted mixed methods application, which employed quantitative and qualitative research instruments. Mixed methods were used for data collection and analysis in the action research process. I employed mixed methods in this action research study to explain and evaluate the procedures and outcomes of the writing tasks. The data obtained from the samples of compositions is analyzed quantitatively, while the audio recordings and the semi-structured interviews are examined from a qualitative approach. Quantitative research involves a process of obtaining scores on a scale and qualitative research in a mixed mode study narrows down the limitations caused by the quantitative data (Creswell, 2014). Hence, the combined methods will bring more clarity to the research and allows triangulation of data. Triangulation is also used to minimize the limitations of one particular approach and reinforce the validity of the findings in this research. Creswell (2014) stated that by affiliating two approaches as compared to using single approach in data collection procedures permits an integrated understanding of the designated research objectives and questions. In this study, the numeric and text data enhanced the

credibility of the action research, and the findings allowed more feasible and reliable action plans for future implementations of writing tasks in classrooms.

According to Ivankova (2014), action researchers tend to move back and forth in investigating a problem and employ changes to the data collection procedures, analysis and actions as new knowledge emerges. The action research process is flexible as it allows researchers to educate themselves with new knowledge gained from the multifaceted situation and figure out possible solutions to the problem. The author explained that the "process is not always linear and the next step is always influenced by what understanding action researchers develop about the problem and the actions taken to resolve the problem"(p. 46). The overall research design was summarized in Figure 3.1.

3.3 Demographic Information

The study involved 45 teenage youths from refugees and asylum seekers background, all of whom are under the protection of United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) Malaysia. They are aged between 13 to 17 years old and are presently attending a refugee community learning center (CLC) located in an area famously known as the Golden Triangle of Kuala Lumpur. The CLC was established in 2008 and mostly accommodates students from the Chin ethnicity. Their tribes can be traced back to the Kachin region in Myanmar. The participants speak and understand a common language called the Chin language, alongside several dispersed dialects that are also used within the Chin community.

It was also understood that the Chin language is not the same as the official language of Myanmar, which is the Myanmar language, or commonly known as the Burmese language. On an interesting note, the participants have picked up some *Bahasa* Malaysia terms and can mischievously use the suffix-*lah* and *-ah* in some occasions. Apart from that, there are also participants who have picked up some foreign language

nuances due to the process of migration from one country to another country. For example, one participant spoke minimal Hindi because he had lived in India for several months before fleeing to Malaysia. Another participant picked up Thai language after having to live on the streets of Bangkok for several months, before making it to the Malaysian shores. Nonetheless for this study, only their English language experiences and the length of time spent in learning English were included in the data.

3.3.1 Selection of Participants

The learning center facilitates classroom levels from kindergarten until Primary Six and does not have any specific regulations regarding classroom enrollments. The total number of enrollment for the year of 2016/2017 was 108, with 20 students below the ages of seven, 36 students within the age range of 7-12 and followed by 52 students above the age of 12. In the preliminary stages of the research, after the pilot study was administered, it was then decided that the participants would be randomly selected from the ages of 13 until 17. The reasons are discussed in section 3.4. *Pilot Study Administration*. Due to the procedures of the writing tasks as well, the grand total of the convenience sampling was set at 45. Convenience sampling decreases the chances of generalizing the overall results to a larger group (Creswell, 2014). The majority of the participants were male (n=30). The distribution of the number of participants according to tasks was as following: Individual (n=15), Collaborative (n=30). An equal amount of written scripts was needed in order to do a comparison, with the individual and collaborative group each producing 15 written scripts.

3.3.2 Profile of Participants

The information obtained from the participants' personal particulars during the proficiency test was used to profile the participants. Participants were asked to fill in their basic information such as age, gender, self-rated proficiency levels in writing and the number of years spent in learning English. The majority of the participants rated

their writing skills as *Average* and the average number of years spent in learning English was 3.5 years. Two tabulated tables of the profiling are attached in Appendix A and B.

3.4 Pilot Study Administration

Pilot studies assist researchers to inspect their intended research instruments prior to the actual data collection process. It is crucial to examine if the instruments are reliable, valid and can be successfully completed by the participants (Creswell, 2014). The main objectives of the pilot study were: a) *to determine the types of topics that suit their proficiency and coherence level b) to determine the time frame needed to complete the task*. The first pilot study involved 12 participants and was only administered to those who agreed to participate voluntarily. There were eight boys and four girls, with the youngest aged 11 and the oldest aged 12. The principal of the learning center was present at the time of the pilot study and took the liberty to ensure that there were no distractions from the non-participating students.

Prior to the pilot study, the participants completed the Cambridge Ventures Placement Test and the scores depicted their levels as "*Basic*" and "*Level 1*". These scores suggested that the participants would best fit into the basic and the first level of Cambridge Ventures textbook series. On an important note as well, these refugee participants have not been exposed to any formal writings and academic writings prior to the study. The concept of writing a composition was relatively new. Before the session started, participants were informed that a composition is similar to writing a story and a composition consist of beginning, a middle storyline and followed by an ending.

The composition writing session was administrated within two groups, with four participants writing individually and the other eight participants writing in pairs. The participants were asked to write from 50-100 words. The time frame given to complete

the tasks was 60 minutes for the individual group, and an extended time frame to 90 minutes was given for the collaborative group. The time frames for both groups were suggested based on existing literature (Dobao, 2012; Wigglesworth & Storch, 2009). A total number of four individually written texts and four paired written texts were collected. The participants of the pilot study were not included in the actual study. During the pilot study, there were several issues that prompted the researcher to administer some changes to the data collection process. The amendments are listed below:

<u>Changes to Composition Topic based on Responses</u>

The initial topic designated for the composition was "*My ambition*". The topic was chosen as it depicted empowerment and has a symbolic array of hope to the future. The term "*ambition*" was explained to the students as "*some figure that you would like to be when you are older, like a doctor or teacher*". However at the beginning stage of the writing, the majority of the participants struggled with the topic, as they had limited background knowledge of the topic. Participants also started to raise their hands to question about the topic, including "*What can I write for what I like to do, you mean, like playing football*?". It also became apparent that the participants confused the term "*ambition*" with *hobby* or *something that they like to do*. The writing session was paused for 20 minutes and the Principal was consulted in this matter. Subsequently, it was decided that these refugee participants have not envisioned about the future and at the same time do not possess the coherence level to write on any serious subject matter. I brainstormed topics that were within their knowledge and after a consultation with the Principal, the writing session presumed and the topic "*My school*" was given instead. With the new topic, the participants were able to complete the written task. Based on the written scripts collected from the pilot study, the topic "*My school*" was seen as a potential topic for the actual study. However, due to the wide scope of the title "*My*

school", it was then decided that " *A week at my school*" would be more precise and manageable.

Changes to Data Collection Procedures

Based on observations as well, several amendments were made to the proficiency test instrument, the age group of the participants, the time frame and the number of words. Table 3.1 summarizes the changes:

Table 3.1 Changes Made to the Data Collection Procedures

Findings	Changes Made
The Cambridge Ventures Placement Test was found to have no inquiries and guidelines on the levels of Common European Framework of References (CEFR) on Languages. The test only provided a guideline on how to choose the right Ventures curriculum for the students based on the test scores.	The Oxford Headway Placement Test A was found to be more comprehensive and the test was built in accordance to the CEFR levels. A guideline on the levels of CEFR was also provided and the test scores can be matched accordingly.
The group that participated in the pilot study was between 11 to 17 years old. However, the younger participants were found to have struggled more in their writings and were also intimidated by the older students. The younger participants were also found to be more passive during the interaction process.	The age group of 13-17 was decided. The proficiency levels of this age range are almost similar, hence in this study; the age factor does not influence the proficiency level.
The initial time frames were set as below: Individual-60 minutes Collaborative-90 minutes	Existing literature has suggested that pair or group writings usually require more time than individual writing due to the interactions that occur at the time of composing. However, for this study, the examiners suggested that similar time frames should be given instead for the purpose of equal comparisons. With this, the time frame for the writing sessions was 1 hour and 15 minutes. The 15 minutes will serve as a time for brainstorming.
The initial number of words was from 50-100 words. However the writing samples from the pilot study showed that the participants could write more than 100 words.	The number of words was set from 100-150 words.

3.5 Writing Tasks' Procedures

The study involved 45 students and they were required to write a composition themed " *A week at my school*". The participants were told to write the composition within a time limit of 75 minutes. The required number of words was set at 100-150 words. The tasks were administered within two groups, individual and collaborative, during morning hours before the commencement of the first lesson. The writing sessions started off with brief introductions about compositions and followed by instructions on how to complete the task.

The participants were informed that the concept of a composition is similar to a form of storytelling. Participants that worked in pairs were given an audio recorder and the audio recorder was placed in the middle of the pairs' sitting position. They were well informed that the presence of an audio recorder closely to them was not harmful and that it was just a device to assist the researcher in understanding them in a prolific way.

3.6 Interview Questions

In this study, the interview questions were semi-structured to verify the reliability of the findings. For the semi-structured interview process, a list of seven questions was prepared. The interview questions were designed based on Ellis and Yuan's (2004) study on the mental processes involved in second language narrative writing. In addition, the interview questions were prepared to progress gradually within stages. The first stage of the questions was designed to elicit the thought processes and the steps taken to write the composition. For example, "*What went through your mind when you were asked to write a composition? Were you thinking about on how to write a composition/ how to start?*" and "*What did you first do when you were given the writing task?*" This was subsequently followed by questions to probe the concerns encountered while writing, like "*What were your concerns while you were writing?*

Were you concerned about the sentence structures/ number of words/spellings/word choices/grammar (tenses, prepositions etc.)?

The final stage of the questions was to verify the participants' personal responses regarding their performances in the writing. The flow of the questions allowed the participants to disclose the experiences and issues related to the task. The complete list of the semi-structured interview questions is attached in Appendix O at the end of the dissertation.

3.7 Data Collection I

The data collection I for the present study was conducted within a span of seven days in October 2016. In the following sections, the administrative procedures for the writing and interview stages will be discussed.

3.7.1 Proficiency Test Administration

The 2012 *Oxford Headway CEFR Placement Test A* was used in the administration of the proficiency test. The test is designed to elicit students' CEFR levels and estimate the level of *Headway* syllabus based on the test scores. In this study, the *Headway* test was mainly used to determine the participants' CEFR levels and the current language competencies. The test consists of nine pages inclusive of the cover page, with a total of 100 multiple-choice questions and a score of 100 percent. The *Headway* test is also photocopiable and can be legally distributed in classrooms. The test was administered on the first day of the data collection process and was distributed to all 45 participants.

Participants were seated according to real examination settings and was each given a form, a set of question paper and a key answer sheet to circle on. The form requires participants to fill in information regarding their age; gender, self-rated proficiency level and the number of years spend in learning English. Detailed instructions were given beforehand, as the participants are not familiar with any forms

of examinations. The key purpose of the test was also explained to them and a demonstration on how to circle the correct answers on the answer sheet was shown. As the participants completed the test, the researcher was at hand to answer any impending questions. Participants were given an hour to complete the test and were allowed to leave in advance once they have completed the test. The results were matched to a score range, as shown in Table 3.2 and based on the scores, the majority of the participants (n=31) are in A1-Low CEFR level.

Table 3.2 The Distribution of Results and the CEFR Levels

Test Results	CEFR Level	Number of Achievers
0-41	A1-LOW	31
41-48	A1-HIGH	9
49-56	A2-LOW	4
57-65	A2-HIGH	1
66-74	B1-LOW	
75-83	B1-LOW-MEDIUM	
84-92	B1-MEDIUM HIGH	
93-100	B1-HIGH	

3.7.2 Writing Administration

The writing sessions were administered the following day, after the proficiency test, over the span of six days. The writing sessions were divided into six days, beginning with the individual writing session and followed by the collaborative writing sessions. All of the writing sessions were carried out in the morning hours before the commencement of their first class. The morning hours were considered to be very conducive for the writing sessions, given the fact that the participants would be extremely exhausted at the end of the school hours. During the pilot study, it was found that the participants were not keen to stay back after school hours and were much more eager to rush off the writings. Apart from that, after school hours, the school boarders will participate in outdoor sports activities and the school will be in a clamorous

condition. A lot of noise will disrupt the recording session. Therefore, for the main data collection, the researcher was more aware of the participants' preferences and the classroom learning schedules. The individual writing session was administered in one day, with all 15 participants writing individually and completing the tasks within the estimated time. The collaborative writing sessions were completed on the remaining five days, with three pairs writing collaboratively per day. Participants were allowed to select their partners, but they were also encouraged to have a mixed-sex group in order to have more diverse groups. However, since the majority of the participants were male, most of the groups were made up of male participants.

3.7.3 Audio Recording Administration

The discussions that occurred between the participants who worked in pairs were audio recorded by using two high quality audio recorders. The recordings for this study were carried out over a course of five days, with two pairs recording on the first four days and followed by one pair recording on the fifth day. Each pair wrote in separate classrooms and some wrote in the study cabins. During the collaborative writing sessions, the participants were told to sit facing one another, and the audio recorder was placed in a strategic manner. To ensure the participants were comfortable with the idea of being recorded, they were also taught on how to use the audio recorders.

The participants handled the audio recorders by themselves and the researcher monitored the handling of the audio recorders. Once the participants were ready to write and discuss, one of the partner would press the recording button. Participants were gently reminded not to press the pause button or stop button once the recording had started. This was done as not to disrupt the flow of information in the recordings. A total number of seven audio recordings were collected during data collection I. The participants were allowed to listen to the recordings once the session has ended. This

was done to enable students to listen to their conversations and be more conscious on their language usage.

3.7.4 Interview Administration

Once the writing sessions were completed, two students who wrote individually and four students (two pairs) who wrote in pairs were randomly selected for the interview stage. The selection of the participants was also confined to the ones who were available after the writing sessions had ended. The interview sessions were conducted in a delicate and thoughtful manner. There were assurances from the researcher that the sessions were not a form of interrogation. Having mentioned that, it is extremely important to understand that refugee children possess a long history of being exposed to all sorts of interrogations. This could include being interrogated by higher authorities, with or without the presence of guardians, during the process of forced migration. Hence, some refugee children may view the process of being interviewed as a threat or a form of being oppressed by someone with more power.

All the interviews were conducted in a one-to-one manner, including with those who wrote in pairs. In order to make the participants feel at ease with the entire process, they were allowed to read through the interview questions and ask questions. During the interview stages, the participants were prompted accordingly based on their responses. The interviews were recorded by using an audio recorder and the interviews lasted between ten to twenty minutes.

3.8 Data Collection II

Data collection II was administered after some shortcomings were encountered during data collection I. The shortcomings regarding the procedures were not foreseen beforehand and some of the outcomes from the first data collection were not expected. Nevertheless, it was crucial to make necessary amendments to some procedures in the second data collection. As mentioned before, action research is not always linear and

changes are employed as researchers gain new knowledge and insights into the situation and problem. Therefore, it must be noted that the changes made in the data collection II did not affect the study in a negative way. Some of the samples collected from the data collection I was used in this study. Most significantly, the shortcomings served as catalysts for better improvements in the procedures and the amendments made in data collection II were only meant to solve the shortcomings. The following sub-section will explain the amendments made in data collection II.

3.8 .1 Amendments in Data Collection II

During data collection I, it was found that some of the participants who wrote in pairs did not fulfill the task requirements. The pairs were asked to interact with each other and co-write the compositions together. However, there were three pairs who mistook the instructions and thought the session was a discussion session, since they were told to "*discuss and write*" and " *ask questions to each other as you write*". The writings were not produced in a composition format and instead the writings were presented in a question and answer format. Below is one of the samples that did not fulfill the task requirements:

> What did you play at your free time? I play football!
>
> What is your favorite subject? English.
>
> When did you born? I was born in 2005.

Based on the findings from the first data collection, it was then decided that a data collection for the paired group should be conducted for a second time. It was also apparent that the majority of the participants did not understand the nature of the task, the techniques to interact with one another and how the entire process of writing in a collaborative manner actually functions.

Changes to the Collaborative Writing Sessions

The second data collection was administered with the same 30 participants and followed the same writing procedures as mentioned in section 3.7.2. During the second data collection process, a demonstration of collaborative writing and interactions were shown to the participants. The researcher collaborated with a colleague and spent 15 minutes to do the demonstration. For the demonstration stage, the researcher and the colleague discussed and wrote a short sample of composition with a different theme and the sample was shown to the participants. The second stage of writing sessions took five days to complete with assistance from the colleague, and the demonstrations were conducted in each session. The findings showed massive improvements in terms of collaborations and interactions.

Changes to the Number of Audio Recordings

Amendments were also done with the number of audio recordings. In the first data collection process, only seven out of 15 recordings were gathered. Based on existing literature, researchers would often select a certain amount of participants from the collaborative group for the purpose of recordings, and not the entire group. There could be various reasons for the existing approach and one of it could be the lack in audio recorders and the study involved a large number of participants. For this study, the researcher decided that all the interactions that occurred in the paired group could be recorded. In the data collection II, a total number of 15 recordings were gathered for the final analysis.

Changes to the Selections of Interview Participants

Aside from that, amendments were also done with the interview administration. The interviews conducted with the participants from data collection I were not adequate enough for a comprehensive analysis. Besides that, since the collaborative group re-wrote the compositions once again in a proper format, the experiences and the opinions

involved would have changed. Likewise, due to the changes made in the selection of the interviewees, the participants who wrote individually in data collection I were also included in the interview process. The interviews were administered after the compositions for both groups were graded.

On an important note, the collaborative writing group did not have an " *Excellent*" band scale, therefore it was then decided that the subsequent highest band scale (*Good*) from the collaborative group would be selected for the interview process instead. In sum, a total of nine participants (three individuals and three pairs) who scored between the ranges of " *Excellent*", " *Good*", " *Satisfactory*" and " *Weak*" from both groups were selected for the interview. The distribution of the interviewees based on writing band scales is tabulated in Table 3.3:

Table 3.3 The Distribution of Interviewees based on Writing Scores

Interviewees from Individual Group	Interviewees from Collaborative Group
Excellent (**IE**), n=1	Good (**CG 1, CG2**), n=2
Satisfactory (**IS**), n=1	Satisfactory (**CS1, CS2**), n=2
Weak (**IW**), n=1	Weak (**CW1, CW2**), n=2
Total=3	**Total=6**

IE=Individual Excellent, IS=Individual Satisfactory, IW=Individual Weak
CG=Collaborative Good, CS=Collaborative Satisfactory, CW=Collaborative Weak

3.9 Summary of Data Collection I and II

In data collection I, the written samples from the individual group were selected for the final analysis but the written samples from the collaborative group were omitted due to the inconsistencies in format. The new written samples and the complete audio recordings for the collaborative group were collected in data collection II. After data collection II, a new set of interviewees was selected from both groups for semi-structured interviews. The selections were based on the band scales obtained in the written scripts.

PILOT STUDY

Proficiency Test I

Administration of Pilot Study

Reviews and amendments to instruments and procedures

DATA COLLECTIONS

Data Collection I

-Proficiency Test II (45 students
- Writing tasks
(15 Individuals, 30 paired, total 30 written scripts)
-Audio recordings for collaborative group (7 samples)
-Semi-structured interviews with 5 participants (random selections)

Amendments

Data Collection II

-Writing tasks (30 paired, total 15 collaborative written scripts)
-Audio recordings for collaborative group (15 samples)
-Semi-structured Interviews with 9 participants, based on band scales, *Excellent, Good, Satisfactory, Weak* and *Very Weak*

DATA ANALYSIS

Quantitative Analysis

-ANOVA for Fluency, Complexity and Accuracy
-Quality of written scripts (Comparison of Test scores and Band scales)

Qualitative Analysis

-Planning, Composing, Revising
-Language Related Episodes (LREs)
-Coding of semi-structured interviews
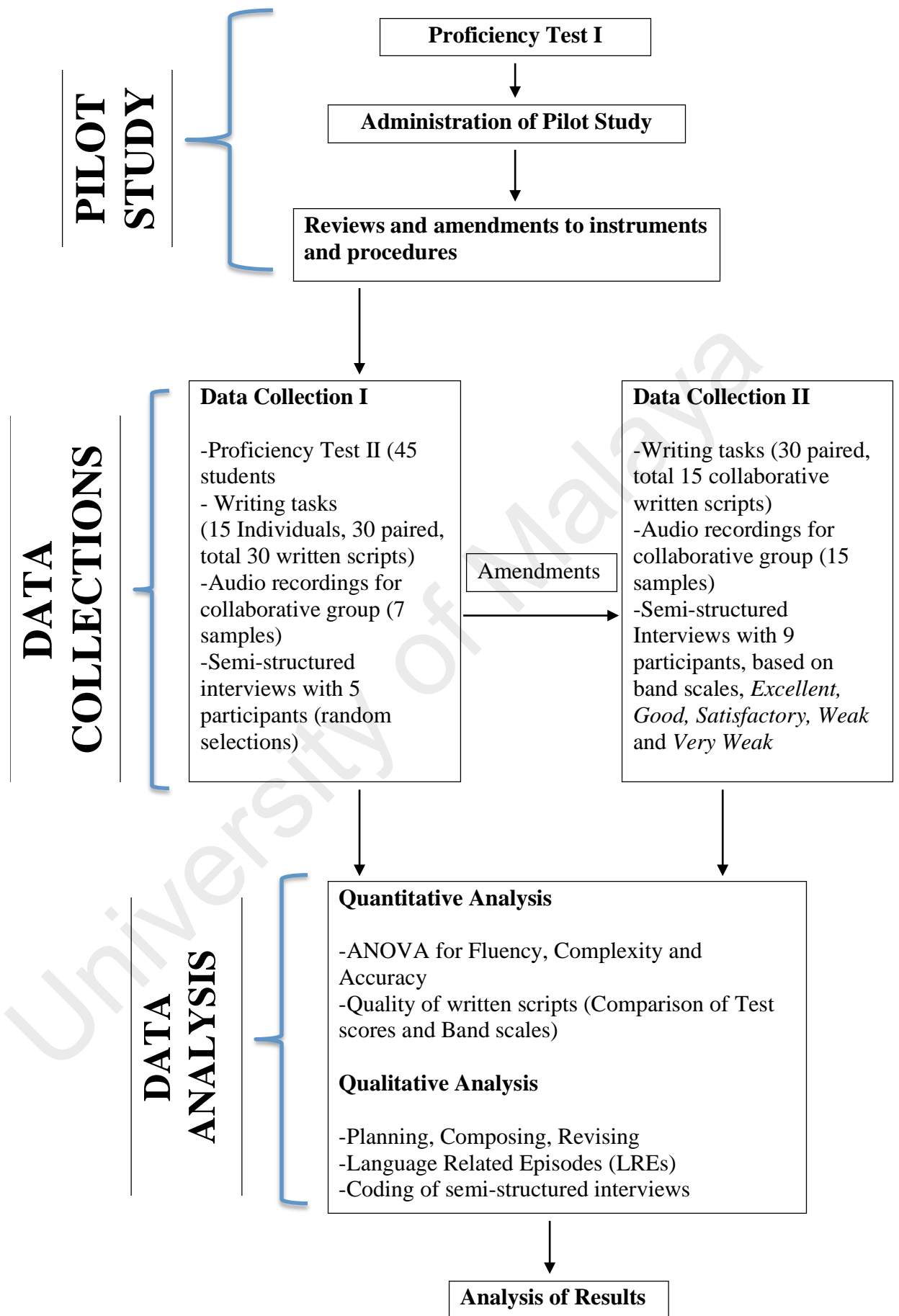
Analysis of Results

Figure 3.1 Research Design Flowchart

3.10 Data Analysis Procedures

In this research, since the research design of this study employed a mixed-method approach, the quantitative data was obtained from the compositions and the qualitative data was obtained from the audio recordings and interviews. The data analysis for the quantitative data was divided into two parts. The first part discusses on the *Fluency, Complexity, Accuracy*, and the second part discusses on the *Quality* of the compositions. Below are the descriptions for each part:

3.10.1 Fluency, Complexity and Accuracy

The written scripts were analyzed in terms of T-units and clauses. The quantitative measures were in accordance with the guidelines provided by Wigglesworth & Storch (2009). The following table illustrates the guidelines:

Table 3.4 Guidelines to Measure Fluency, Complexity and Accuracy

Fluency	- Average number of words per text - Average number of T-units per text - Average number of clauses per text
Complexity	- Proportion of clauses to T-units - Percentage of dependent clauses of total clauses
Accuracy	- Percentage of error-free T-units - Percentage of error-free clauses

The measures were analyzed by using the Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) statistical tool. Descriptive statistics, including the significant differences in frequencies, mean and standard deviations were computed for the three variables. The significant differences were used to answer the research question one in Chapter Four, which is " *What are the differences in terms of fluency, complexity and accuracy between the collaborative work and individual work tasks?"* Additionally, an inter-rater agreement was checked with random samples of 14 composition scripts by using an

Independent T-test and reliability test. The inter-rater who assessed the T-units and clauses is a former IELTS examiner and presently a freelance English teacher in Malaysia. She has been teaching English since 1995 and has previously taught in British Council Hong Kong and Jakarta, Bangkok School of Management and a number of other institutions. Based on the Independent T-test, there were no significant differences for the results between the researcher and the inter-rater as $p > 0.005$ for all the measurements in both individual and collaborative groups. In addition, the results from the reliability test showed that the alpha coefficient for all items is 0.612, suggesting that the items have internal consistency between the researcher and inter-rater.

3.10.2 Quality of Written Scripts

The composition scripts were mainly analyzed in terms of task fulfillments, the appropriateness of language used and content. A standard marking scheme from the Malaysian Secondary Three examination paper, or commonly known as the *Pentaksiran Tingkatan 3* (PT3), was adopted in this study to assess the quality of the compositions produced. The marking scheme on the PT3 Section D has a 5-band impression scales for composition, ranging from *Excellent, Good, Satisfactory, Weak* and finally *Very Weak* (refer to Appendix H). More specifically, in this analysis, the criteria were adopted to accommodate the proficiency levels of the participants in general. The evaluations focused on the elaborations of information and ideas, appropriate responses to the given topic, and on the correct language and structures.

Likewise, the PT3 composition-marking scheme was considered to be appropriate for this study, as the marking scheme was designed for students in the lower secondary. Apart from this, another rater who has had more than twenty years of experience in assessing Malaysian secondary school English examinations marked the scripts independently. The rater marked the compositions in accordance with the PT3 band scales. At the time of the marking, the rater was fully aware of the participants'

proficiency and backgrounds. Next, the researcher compared the band scales given by the rater in order to determine the significant differences in grading. As a matter of fact, in the process of deciding the final band scales, subsequent discussions between the researcher and the rater resolved all disagreements and led to an equal finalization of the band scales.

An inter-rater agreement of 98% was established and based on the Independent T-test results, there were no significant differences between both markers in individual (scores: p=0.842, band scales: p=1.000) or in pairs (scores: p=0.674, band scales: p=1.000). A common ground was achieved and as a result, the final band scales allowed the researcher to have a reliable and valid data for further analysis. In addition, after the inter-rater agreement was achieved, the band scales obtained by the participants who wrote individually and the band scales obtained by the participants who wrote in pairs were then compared. The comparisons were done to thoroughly examine the effects of individual and collaborative writing tasks on the quality of the compositions. Similarly, the data analysis for the qualitative data was divided into two parts as well. The first part discusses on the coding of the audio recording and the second part discusses on the coding of the interview. Below are the descriptions for each part:

3.10.3 Transcriptions of Audio Recordings

For the analysis of the pair dialogues, four recordings from the pairs who scored *Good, Satisfactory, Weak* and *Very Weak* band scales in their written scripts were selected. The pairs that scored *Good, Satisfactory* and *Weak* were the same pairs that participated in the semi-structured interviews. In addition, the selections from each band scales were done in order to examine how participants in different band scales interact. The dialogues were transcribed and a Chin native speaker translated the L1 into English. The process of interactions was analyzed based on the guidelines provided by

Wigglesworth & Storch (2009, p. 453). The interactions were analyzed at two levels, as listed below.

> 1. Planning, composing and revising
> 2. Analysis of language related episodes (LREs)

In this study, the focus of the qualitative analysis was mainly on the language related episodes (LREs). Following existing literatures, these LREs have been categorized according to their focus and the outcomes (Dobao, 2012). The focuses of the LREs are *Form-focused* (F-LREs), *Lexis-focused* (L-LREs) and *Mechanics-focused* (M-LREs). In addition, the outcomes of the LREs were classified as *correctly resolved, unresolved* and *incorrectly resolved.* The findings were used to answer the research question three in Chapter Four.

3.10.4 Coding of Interviews

The nine interview recordings were transcribed individually and following this, the transcripts were coded based on three themes: 1) *the participants' thought processes and the steps taken to write the composition; 2) The concerns encountered while writing* and 3) *personal feedback on their writing performances.* In order to code based on the themes, I employed distinctive codes to mark the participants' responses in the interview transcripts. The codes were developed based on Ellis & Yuan's (2004) mental processes in second language narrative writing. The list of codes is attached in Appendix Y. The findings from the semi-structured interviews were presented at the end of Chapter Four in order to answer the final research question.

3.11 Ethical Considerations

According to Jacobsen and Landau (2003), social scientists involved in humanitarian fieldworks often face ethical dilemmas in terms of securities and confidentialities of their subjects. The main ethical consideration in this study involved

the confidentiality of the participants' personal details and the data revealed in this study did not compromise with the UNHCR standard operating procedures. Prior to the study, the head of the refugee community learning center was consulted and the details of the study were thoroughly explained. Since the participants are below the ages of 18 and unaccompanied by any parents, the head of the school was asked to be their legal guardian in the consent. The head of the school was assured of strict confidentiality for the identities of the participants. Once the approval has been legally obtained from the head of the school, sets of consent forms were then distributed to all the participants. Care was taken to minimize any harm as the extent of their involvement in the study was explained clearly. After signing the forms to indicate voluntary participation, the participants were assured that the tasks would have no implications on any aspects of their stay in Malaysia as refugees. A copy of the consent form was given to the participants for personal credit. In addition, tokens of appreciation were given to the learning center once the data has been collected.

In addition, all participants that were involved in collaborative writing tasks and interviews during data collection I were not pressured to participate for a second time in data collection II. Reasons were given for the second request and their rights to decline participation or any refusal were notified in advance.

3.12 Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the research methodology used in this study and each method was explained meticulously. The chapter included a brief explanation on the research design used and how this research design was related to the study. This was followed by a detailed description of the participants' background, their learning contexts and the research instruments used. Particular attention was also given to the procedures and a summary of the necessary amendments made in the procedures was provided for future references. Finally this chapter concluded with a short summary of

the ethical considerations that were aligned with the standards set by human rights commissions. The next chapter will present the findings for the quantitative and qualitative data as well as the analysis and discussion.

CHAPTER 4: DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

4. 1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, the research methodology used in this chapter was elucidated in a precise manner. This chapter analyzes the quantitative and qualitative data obtained from the research instruments: written scripts, audio recordings of the pairs and semi-structured interviews. The written scripts yielded the quantitative data, while the audio recordings and semi-structured interviews elucidated the qualitative data. The participants' background information and the learning context were discussed in Chapter Three as to provide an overview of the study's sample population. This chapter presents the results and subsequent discussion of the findings in order to answer all the research questions. It is divided into two parts, whereby the first part focuses on the data analysis and the second part focuses on comprehensive discussion of findings in relation to the literature.

The first part will present the descriptive statistical analysis and the quality of the written scripts, to answer the first and second research questions: *1) What are the differences in terms of fluency, complexity and accuracy between the collaborative and individual writing tasks?* and *2) What are the effects of collaborative and individual writing tasks on the writing performances of the refugee learners?* The following section will present an analysis on the language related episodes (LREs) of the collaborative writing group, thereby answering research question three: 3) *What is the main focus of the Language Related Episodes (LREs) among the paired refugee learners during composing?* The final section of the chapter will answer research question four on the participants' approach in writing, 4) *How do the refugee learners approach the writing tasks?* through the semi-structured interviews.

4.2 Analysis of Written Scripts

This section discusses the distinguishable differences in the compositions completed by the participants who wrote individually and by those who worked collaboratively. Following similar existing literature (Storch, 2005; Storch & Wigglesworth, 2009; Wigglesworth & Storch, 2009), the compositions were systematically examined in terms of fluency, complexity and accuracy. Initially, the lengths of the scripts were physically calculated and the texts were then classified into T-units, clauses and dependent clauses. For fluency, the measures were determined by the average number of words and the total average counts for T-units and clauses per script.

Meanwhile, complexity was determined by the ratio of clauses per T-unit and the degree of embedded texts was measured by the percentage of dependent clauses per clauses. The ration of clauses per T-unit was deemed reliable by Foster and Skehan (1996), as the measures were parallel with other complexity measures done by researchers. However, Wigglesworth and Storch (2009) added a further step to measure the ratio of dependent clauses per clauses as to decide the degree of embedded texts. Therefore, based on the measures provided by these authors, it was then decided that the complexity of the compositions in this study would be examined through the rations and the degrees of various clauses per T-unit.

In addition, the measures for linguistic accuracy were based on the proportions of error free T-units for all the T-units, and error free clauses for all the clauses in the text. The accuracy was conveyed in percentages and the measures were determined with the amount of non-errors found in lexical and grammatical choices. According to Storch and Wigglesworth (2007), all lexical choices that are vague should be taken into consideration for the levels of accuracy.

On the contrary, the authors proposed that the errors in spellings and punctuations should be disregarded as those two categories represent the mechanics of writing. The authors instead suggested that the accuracy of the scripts should be determined lexically and grammatically. Following Wigglesworth & Storch (2009), this study would focus on examining the lexical and grammatical accuracy among limited English proficient users. The following sub-sections will present the overall findings for fluency, complexity and accuracy for the compositions.

4.2.1 Fluency

The comparative analysis for fluency yielded no significant differences between all measures for both individual and collaborative written scripts. As presented in Table 4.1, (Number of words F=0.063, df=1, p=0.804; T-units F=0.167, df=1, p=0.686; Clauses F=0.037, df=1, p=0.849), the intensity of writing implementations was parallel in relation to tasks for individual and collaborative. However, in terms of the number of words produced or the length of the productions, individual category substantially had the maximum word counts. The average number of words per text for individual participants was approximately 239, whereas for the collaborative participants it was 234. This denotes that collaborative work tasks do not necessarily produce more word counts. Meanwhile, the independent analysis for the number of T-units produced revealed that individual group had a better margin. Interestingly, the findings were similar to Wigglesworth and Storch (2009)'s results, whereby there were no significant differences in terms of fluency for both groups. Likewise, Dobao (2012) noted that the texts written by individuals were relatively longer as compared to the collaborative group.

Table 4.1 Measures of Fluency by Individual and Pairs

		Individual			Pair			Total	
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Number of words	15	239.00	131.983	15	229.20	74.953	30	234.10	105.576
T-units	15	24.87	14.322	15	22.93	11.455	30	23.90	12.780
Clauses	15	30.80	16.971	15	31.80	10.772	30	31.30	13.976

4.2.2 Complexity

In terms of lexical and grammar complexity, the measures indicated that there were no significant differences between all measures for both individual and collaborative groups, as depicted in Table 4.2 (T-units F=0.167, df=1, p=0.686; Clauses F=0.037, df=1, p=0.849; Dependent Clauses F=2.535, df=1, p=0.123; Clauses per T-unit F=4.167, df=1, p=0.051; Dependent per Clauses F=4.075, df=1, p=0.053). There were no differences in terms of clauses per T-unit and for the percentages of dependent clauses, implying that the scripts written by the individuals and pairs were practically indistinguishable. However, independently on average, the clauses per T-unit and the ratio for dependent clauses per clauses were comparatively higher in the collaborative group. This seems to indicate that collaborative writing tasks have better complexification. Dobao (2012)'s findings also yielded no statistically significant differences in measures of complexity for both categories, although on average one more word per T-unit were recorded in pairs.

Table 4. 2 Measures of Complexity by Individual and Pairs

	Individual			Pair			Total		
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
T-units	15	24.87	14.322	15	22.93	11.455	30	23.90	12.780
Clauses	15	30.80	16.971	15	31.80	10.772	30	31.30	13.976
Dependent Clauses	15	5.93	5.650	15	8.87	4.357	30	7.40	5.177
Clauses per T-unit	15	1.2693	.25778	15	1.5793	.52864	30	1.4243	.43800
Dependent per Clauses	15	.1853	.15042	15	.3080	.18100	30	.2467	.17501

4.2.3 Accuracy

Nevertheless, contrary to expectations, the ANOVA test results, as presented in Table 4.3 (T-units F=0.167, df=1, p=0.686; Error free T-units F=0.634, df=1, p=0.433; % of Error free T-units F=0.121, df=1, p=0.731; Clauses F=0.037, df=1, p=0.849; Error free Clauses F=2.826, df=1, p=0.104; % of Error free Clauses F=1.453, df=1, p=0.238) confirmed that there were no significant differences for the lexical and grammatical accuracies in the scripts written by individual and collaborative groups. Although there were indications that the pairs scored better on the average mean scores for all the accuracy measures, none of these variances were statistically significant. However this result differed from the findings depicted by Wigglesworth and Storch (2009), where the authors reportedly found significant differences of 13.4% in variance. The pairs were found to have significantly more error free T-units, but the individuals scored better in terms of accuracy for clauses.

Table 4.3 Measures of Accuracy by Individual and Pairs

	Individual			Pair			Total		
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
T-units	15	24.87	14.322	15	22.93	11.455	30	23.90	12.780
Error free T-units	15	9.87	3.777	15	11.87	8.967	30	10.87	6.837
Clauses	15	.4478	.15643	15	.4737	.24181	30	.4608	.20053
Clauses	15	30.80	16.971	15	31.80	10.772	30	31.30	13.976
Error free Clauses	15	12.73	4.652	15	17.47	9.862	30	15.10	7.950
% of Error free Clauses	15	.4563	.14589	15	.5393	.22296	30	.4978	.18988

In sum, in relation to the first research question, the scripts written by the individuals were considerably longer than the ones written by the collaborative group, but there were no significant differences in terms of fluency for both groups. From an assessment point of view, the lexical and grammar complexities were almost similar, given the fact that the study involved limited English proficient users. However the pairs in this study did produce more accuracy in T-units and clauses, although the differences were not significant.

This is a positive result, at least according to the measures used in this study. According to Wigglesworth & Storch (2009), although collaborative writing tasks may not produce the highest number of word counts or produce more complex grammar and lexical choices, the tasks do help the learners to pool in linguistics resources and correct the outcomes of them. Additionally, in an assessment context, collaborative writing

tasks could help learners to produce better texts than they normally do individually and allow them to learn more from each other.

4.3 Quality of Written Scripts

This section presents and discusses the findings for the quality of the written scripts produced by the individual and collaborative writing groups. The compositions were based on the topic " *A week at my school*" and the participants were required to write approximately 100-150 words for the task. The written scripts were mainly analyzed based on three criteria, namely task fulfillment, language and content. The language criterion refers to the appropriateness of word choices, vocabulary used and the accuracy of sentence structures. On the other hand, the content criterion refers to the relevant ideas, supporting details and points of view. The marking style was based on the Malaysian secondary PT3 examination-marking scheme and the final scores were matched to a five band impression scales, ranging from *Excellent, Good, Satisfactory, Weak* to *Very Weak*. The list of composition scores is attached in Appendix I and the quality of the written scripts is determined by the five band impression scales for both groups. An inter-rater marked the composition scripts and an inter-rater agreement of 98% was established. The table below shows the cumulative band scales obtained by the participants in individual and collaborative groups:

Table 4.4 The Distribution of Band Scales for Individual and Collaborative Groups

Band Scales	Individual	Collaborative
Excellent	1	0
Good	3	3
Satisfactory	7	6
Weak	3	5
Very Weak	1	1

As can be observed from Table 4.4, the band scales revealed that both groups accomplished an almost a similar range, although the individual group appeared to have the better range of scales, with one participant in the *Excellent* band scale. However based on the scores obtained in language and content, the collaborative group performed better in terms of ideas and supporting details. The pairs were able to generate a variety of ideas pertaining to the topic as compared to the individuals and this could be due to the fact that during discussions, the participants were able to pool in ideas and diligently discussed them. For the language component, the individual group seemed to have scored better in terms of having proper sentence structures while the collaborative group was slightly disorganized in the arrangements of their sentence structures.

The possible explanation for this scenario is perhaps that during discussions, the pairs may not have had the sufficient time or space to properly organize all the ideas into relevant sentence structures, thus resulting in the disorganization of sentences. On the contrary, the individuals may only have one idea at a time and therefore they were able to elaborate the idea properly. The idiom " Too many cooks spoil the broth" is clearly implied to this situation. In addition, there were no significant differences in terms of task fulfillments, and the appropriateness of vocabulary used in both groups. In fact, both groups were able to generate ideas and supporting details due to the familiarity of the topic. Likewise, the participants mostly used simple and non-complex vocabulary. The simple and non-complex vocabularies indicate a lack of mastery in words for both groups. Two compositions that scored *Good* and two compositions that scored *Weak* in both individual and collaborative groups were randomly selected for a detailed analysis. However, it must be noted that the selection of the written scripts based on the band scales was just a mere decision and the emphasis should be given to the context of the written scripts produced. The analysis for A (Individual), B (Collaborative), C (Individual) and D (Collaborative) will be discussed here:

Example 1: *Good* band scale

Paragraph 1 (A)

> I study in ULC since 2015. ULC school is very good for me because volunteer teachers are great. They teach us How to respect the people and How to speak in English Language. ULC school is not under the NGO or UNHCR.

Paragraph 1 (B)

> I woke up at 6 o'clock and I go to school at 9.30 and the school start at 10 o'clock on Monday morning we learn Mathematics, for three hours after that we have a lunch break after that we just play and we start our the class again at 1 o'clock until 3pm.

In the first paragraph, A clearly had proper sentence structures and the sentences were written in a short and precise manner. The ideas were well organized and coherent. In fact, the ideas were elaborated with supporting details and there was a unity in the composition. On the contrary, in the first paragraph, B started off well but along the way the ideas were all cramped into a single sentence and there was no coherence in between the lines. There were a variety of ideas in the paragraph, however the ideas were not well expanded. In addition, the sentence lacks planning and the structure is haphazard.

Paragraph 2 (A)

> On Monday we learn Math and English spelling. Math is very difficult for me but I try. English spelling is very easy for me and I always passed spelling test. On Wednesday, we learn grammar. Our teacher name is Nori. She is very good and she teach us many grammar. Grammar is very important to me. Grammar is important in English words because grammar control the all English words and sentence. On Thursday, we learn Geography because I want to know more about the world. I learn and I got many

knowledge. My favorite subject are English and Geography. English language is important for us because it is popular language and most of people are speak in English today.

Paragraph 3 (B)

On Tuesday morning you learn English Grammar and the English Grammar Lisa and she arrived at 10.30am and some 10am and she finish at 12 o'clock and sometimes 12.30pm o'clock, and in the evening you learn about writing and some preposition and the teacher is calle Kevin and he is from Australia. On Wednesday morning you learn Mathematics like Algebra and its very difficult and I like fraction.

According to the rater, A and B showed a visible understanding of the topic in terms of being able to justify the activities that occurred in their school. Similarly, both A and B were able to use adjectives like " *difficult*" in the course of describing their hardest encounters. This indicates a mature treatment of the words and context, although the deficiency in the mastery of various words is still very apparent. On the contrary, sequence connectors and linkers were not present in both scripts.

Meanwhile, A seemed to have more supporting details on the facts and tended to elaborate on the main idea. For example, A mentioned about learning English grammar and the importance of learning grammar was described. A seemed to be able to present ideas and elaborations in a realistic manner. However the rater indicated that as much as A tried to elaborate on the same idea, the learner is unable to generate new concepts pertaining to the idea. This was evident when A relatively mentioned about English language and the importance of English language at the end of the paragraph. The elaborations were redundant as English grammar and English language can be explained in the same sentence structure as both represent the same subject.

On the contrary, B appeared to be very comfortable in placing all the ideas fully and did not attempt to elaborate more with supporting details. Moreover, the rater noticed that B was not wise enough to form shorter sentences to minimize the grammatical and spelling errors. Instead, the long sentences tended to result in more errors and missing words. For example, B omitted the word " *teacher*" in the first line of the paragraph and instead of *teacher Lisa*; it became *English grammar Lisa,* which basically did not make any sense. The unintended mistake just obstructed the reading of the composition. In addition, the usage of "you" and "I" was very noticeable in the composition instead of "we". This could be due to direct applications from the pair dialogue as one participant asked the other partner of his own preferences when it came to subject matters.

Example 2: *Weak* band scale

Paragraph 2 (C)

On Monday, we go to school and we have activity it a lot of fun. We learn about sciences, this is a lots of intresting. After we finish, we have a lunch and we go back home. On Tuesday we have sport in our class. We learn about English. On Wednesday we go to a river in our school.

Paragraph 1 (D)

Today in our first to go to school. In Monday we learn about English and Geopray we like to English most because English lang is important for us and it's useful langlang in Tuesday, we learn Mathematic and sports. We like to learn about sports because we like sports most. Wednesday we play football with other students.

In terms of task fulfillment, both C and D fairly met the requirements, as they were able to generate minimal ideas based on the given topic. However it must be noted

that both C and D were not able to form paragraphs to illustrate their compositions and the length of written texts were short. According to the rater, C had proper sentence structures with relevant ideas, although the ideas were not considerably extended. On the other hand, D's sentence structures were disorganized in the sense that some sentences did not sum up to logical manner. The ideas were mostly displaced and there were incidences of missing words that impeded the flow of the reading. This again suggests that pairs tend to generate more than one idea at the same time but they are not able to properly organize them. Likewise, they seemed to have eagerly rushed through the sentences without revising again. Surprisingly, C mentioned about a "*river*" in the school, however for the record, there was no such existence in the school area. Hence, the "*river*" was regarded as off the topic. In addition, both C and D did not use sequence connectors and the vocabularies were just generic terms.

In relation to research question two, although collaborative writing tasks allowed participants to generate sufficient ideas and supporting details, the ideas were mostly disorientated and the sentences structures were disorganized. On the contrary, participants who wrote individually may not have had the advantages of generating more ideas, however they were able to wisely organize their ideas and had more precise sentence structures.

4.4 Analysis of Pair Dialogue

This section discusses on the data collected from the audio recordings during the collaborative writing tasks. Four transcripts (Appendix K, L, M, N) were selected from a total number of 15 transcripts, based on the band scales of *Good, Satisfactory, Weak* and *Very Weak*. These four transcripts were selected for a detailed analysis of patterns of interactions during the stage of writing. The pair interactions were analyzed at two levels: *Planning, composing, revising* and *language related episodes (LREs).* The first section will present the findings on planning, composing and revising. In addition, the

analysis for the interactions that occurred among the pairs that scored between four different band scales would provide a new perspective on the various patterns of interactions.

4.4.1 Planning, Composing and Revising

According to Wigglesworth and Storch (2009), three prominent phases of writing processes have been identified, specifically planning, composing and followed by revising. However, it was noted that there are contrasting views on the phases of writing processes. Tribble (1996) emphasized that learners commonly undergo four phases of writing, namely pre-writing, composing, drafting and finally editing in the process of completing one. The author has added that editing, unlike revising, is a form of feedback from other students. Hence, the process of editing should result in the production of multiple drafts with amendments made to the original language and content, based on the feedbacks provided by their peers. In this study, the three distinct phases suggested by Wigglesworth and Storch (2009) were used as the benchmarks for the analysis of the pair dialogues. This was because in the data collection process, participants only produced a single written script and there were no feedback sessions with other students.

Wigglesworth & Storch (2009) pointed out that the planning stage happens before the learners began to write their text, where the schemata are activated to enable the process of brainstorming to take place. Learners generate ideas before proceeding to the composing phase and the entire text is thoroughly examined through revision, once the composition phase has ended. In this analysis, the main objective was to examine the writing approaches used by the participants in order to complete the writing tasks.

Based on the selected transcripts (refer to Appendix K-N, excerpts A1, B1, C1 and D1), the participants in this study unexpectedly spend most of the time in planning and composing phase, or more accurately, planning and composing at the same time. At

the initial stage, the participants were given approximately 15 minutes to brainstorm and discuss on the layout of the composition. With this, it was apparent that the participants were not aware of the importance of planning phase; hence the planning and composing phase literally happened at the moment they began to write. On an interesting note, the pair that scored *Good* in their band scales diligently scribbled down *Monday to Sunday* before they began to write. They scribbled down the days that they intend to include in the composition and the listing of *Monday* to *Sunday* assisted them to compose the activities according to the days, as illustrated in Example I.

Example I

Good Pair

1. A1: How to spell?

2. A2: T…U…E…S… D…A…Y… W…E…D… N…E…S… D…A…Y…

   T…H…U… R…S…D…A…Y… F…R…I…D…A…Y

3. A1: Hmm…*ahh*…Saturday…how?

4. A2: Saturday no *lah*…only Monday to Friday…(short pause)

5. A2: Monday we learn about math…

The remaining three pairs did not execute the planning stage as expected. Subsequently, during the composing stage, it was very evident that all the pairs worked along fairly well by inquiring on ideas and information from their partners (refer to Appendix K-N).

However, there was a noticeable pattern that occurred among all the pairs, whereby the obvious dominant ones managed to acquire the opportunities to compose and lead the forum of discussions. According to Doise & Mugny (1984), even when learners who share similar proficiency and schemata levels are deposited jointly, the prospects of having a member to dominate the other are unavoidable. The possibility of the dominant member possessing better skills in communications than the other is

higher, thus resulting in the extra vocal one to assume the responsibility of sailing the discussions.

The revision phase was depicted to occur at the final stages of the composing. Surprisingly, based on the transcripts, all four pairs did not engage in the final revision phase. In this stage, the participants were more concerned on the requirements for the total number of words, prompting them to calculate the final amount of words as compared to extensively reading through the composition before submitting. However, there were considerable differences when it came to the revision phase, as some participants actually spend more time constructing questions, and then re-revising it again and again before generating another new idea. There were instances where the participant in the pair group that scored *Good* in the band scales (participant A1), requested for confirmations repeatedly from her partner in order to verify the facts and spellings (refer to Appendix K). This shows that even when limited English proficient learners encounter linguistic problems, the repeated interactions do create opportunities to improve input (Dobao, 2012).

According to Wigglesworth and Storch (2009), the reconfirmation stage is known as the recursive approach, whereby the learners generate new ideas and revise the ideas multiple times before proceeding to the next idea. The recursive approach was subtle in the *Satisfactory* pair, while the remaining *Weak* and *Very Weak* pairs were seen to be just sailing through the composing phase with minimal or no revision at all (refer Appendix M, N).

4.4.2 Language Related Episodes (LREs)

In this part, the oral interactions between the pairs that scored *Good, Satisfactory, Weak* and *Very Weak* in the collaborative group were examined for language related episodes. The four transcripts were randomly selected from each of the band scales. Following Swain and Lapkin (1998), an LRE was recognized when a

learner specifically deliberates and contemplates over the language functions and usage. During these episodes, learners are inclined to inquire on their language applications and alternatively make necessary amendments if needed. As mentioned previously, language related episodes were classified according to their focus (*form, lexis, mechanic*) and outcomes (*correctly resolved, unresolved, incorrectly resolved*). To answer research question three, the oral interactions between the selected pairs were analyzed for the frequencies in focus and the outcomes in LREs. The frequencies were determined by the number of turns in the LREs. As shown in Table 4.5, the main focus of LREs was in terms of mechanics, with 49 turns out of a total of 176 turns among the four pairs. This was followed by form-focused (13 turns) and lexis-focused as the least (6 turns).

Table 4.5 Focuses of LREs

	Total turns	**%**
Form-focused LREs	13	7.39
Lexis-focused LREs	6	3.40
Mechanics-focused LREs	49	27.84

Meanwhile, Table 4.6 presents the results of the outcomes of LREs. The findings showed clear differences between the outcomes as the pairs produced a high number of correctly resolved LREs. This shows that the pairs were able to correctly resolve a total of 50 LREs, measuring up to 28% of the total LREs produced. The following segments will discuss the LREs produced in detail.

Table 4.6 Outcomes of LREs

	Total turns	**%**
Correctly resolved LREs	50	28.40
Incorrectly resolved LREs	8	4.54

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Unresolved LREs	1	0.56

Instances of participants pooling in linguistics resources, or collectively scaffolding to construct sentences and grammatical forms were present in the data, as illustrated in the following three examples. When learners deliberate over morphology (word forms) or grammar, the LRE was categorized as form-focused. In such LRE, learners are inclined to request for confirmations and clarifications on the appropriateness of word forms. In addition, learners may correct the choices and seek for justifications on why such word forms or grammar should or should not be used (Wigglesworth & Storch, 2009). As illustrated in Example 1(a), the pair that scored *Good*, A1 and A2 were in the midst of writing about their morning schedules, when A1 unpredictably recalled a grammatical rule on the usage of past tense (turn 56). A1 was contemplating on the verb tense "*woke up*" instead of "*wake up*". Meanwhile the other participant, A2 expressed on what she believed on to be the correct grammatical rule (on that context) and agreed upon the grammar form without arguing (turn 57).

Example 1(a). Form-focused LRE.

Good pair

56. A1: Ok…ok…earrrlyyy…on Wednesday we **wake**…no we **woke**…yes **woke**…past tense…we shower then we clean our kitchen…we sweep floor…we throw our…

57. A2: Yes…. yes…we **woke** up…we sweep the floor….we clean our kitchen…the house…oh how to spell kitchen? K…I…T…C…H…E…N… right?

Similarly, in another pair that scored *Weak*, C1 seemed to have recalled the past tense for "*sing*" and corrected C2 about it (turn 37). In addition, C1 was able to mention the rhyme "*sing sang song*" and justified it to C2. With the rhyme, C1 managed to convince his partner to use the correct verb tense and the pair agreed on the term "*sang*" which

appeared in their written text. The *Weak* pair managed to work along and solve the grammatical issue.

Example 1 (b). Form-focused LRE.

Weak pair

> 36. C2: Hmm ok…and then we **sing** a song again right?
>
> 37. C1: Yes…**sing**…eh…no…not **sing** *lah*…**sang**…**sang**…**sing sang song**!

Aside from tenses, participants were seen to have deliberated on the choice of prepositions. As seen in Example 1(c), A2 was contemplating between "*at*" and "*on*" (turn 67) and sought for clarifications from A1. In the discussion, A1 was the dominant interlocutor, however she chose not to provide further information (turn 68) although she knew the correct preposition. This was evident when A1 later agreed upon the answer given by A2 (turn 70), suggesting that she may have wanted A2 to contribute to the task as well. This is a positive gesture as the higher interlocutor indirectly motivates the other half to pool in her grammatical resources.

Example 1 (c). Form-focused LRE.

Good Pair

> 67. A2: Yes we pray and eat first…after that we drink water…water…we study because we have dreams right? We study **a**t? **On**?
>
> 68. A1: You think *laa*…
>
> 69. A2: I study **a**t night…8pm…
>
> 70. A1: We study **a**t 8pm-10pm…. we do our homework at night…or we did our home because teacher gave us to do poem. Then we have…read story at night…to read book…story…

In this study, the main discussion in the lexical-LRE was the word choices on the context. Lexis-focused LREs are parts of discussions where learners inquire on the

meaning of a word, search for new terms and occasionally consider alternative terms. As illustrated in Example 2 (b), the *Weak* pair had a lexical encounter when C1 unintentionally mentioned a non-English word and the situation was resolved immediately by C2. In this scenario, C1 mentioned about eating "*roti kosong*" (turn 5), which is a type of bread in the Malaysian context. However C2 was quick to react and remind C1 that "*roti kosong*" should not be written in the text because it is a *Bahasa* Malaysia word. C1 acknowledged the fact and the word "*bread*" (turn 6) was used in the text to replace "*roti kosong*".

Example 2 (b). Lexis-focused LRE.

Weak pair

      4. C2: Ok…or washing…and we change our T-shirts…we wear…W…E…A…R… T-shirts and breakfast…B…R…E…A…K…F…A…S…T…breakfast…have breakfast…

      5. C1: Yes…yes…milo and ***roti kosong***!

      6. C2: Bread and Milo…M…I…L…O…no ***roti kosong*** laa…**bread**! We eat **bread** and drink Milo first. After that…hmm…

      7. C1: Oh haha…. yeah…**bread**…**bread**…we go class…class

      8. C2: Yes…yes… after breakfast we start our class (L1: What time?)

Another example of lexis-focused form was found in the *Very Weak* pair. The extra pauses and frustrated tones indicated that D1 was considerably lost for words (turn 5), although he knew what he wanted to convey. D1 managed to recall the word "*important*" and also added "*useful*" to emphasize on the intensity of the subject matter. However D2 wasn't able to process the word and seek for clarifications from D1. D1 relentlessly repeated the term "*important*" and added on "*useful*" for reaffirmations. Despite that, it was very obvious that due to the lack in vocabulary mastery, the *Very*

Weak pair was not able to further elaborate on their discussions. The lacking disrupted the flow of the interactions as evident in the long pauses and lengthening of each turns.

Example 2 (c). Lexis-focused LRE.

Very Weak Pair

    5. D1:We like to many…to learn…no learn…the most…the most…because English…what ah….*aiyo*!

    6. D2: Huh?

    7. D1: Because English is very important to us *lol*!

    8. D2: English…English…we would…what?

    9. D1: English very very important and useful! It will be ahh…ahh…ahh…our…

In mechanics-focused LREs, learners tend to look into the spelling, pronunciations and punctuations. In this study, the majority of the conversations in all the four pairs were focused on mechanics LREs. In Example 3 (a), A1 stipulated spellings for most of the part as A2 was writing. Occasionally for certain reasons, A1 knew precisely on which terms to spell out for A2 as she assumed that A2 wouldn't know (turn 58, 62). In addition, pronunciations similarly played a huge role in determining the right word choices. In between the discussions, A1 mentioned about the commencement of the morning class and said the word "*start*" to indicate the beginning of the lesson. However, A2 misinterpreted the pronunciation as to "*stuck*" and interrogated A1 about it. This indicated that A2 was considerably conscious that term sounded wrong and seek for clarifications from A1 (turn 61). While coding the interactions, the researcher noticed that A1 did pronounce the word " *start*" as " *stuck*", which contributed to the misinterpretation. Nevertheless, in the process of explaining, A1 not only spelled out the correct term, but she reassured the term again to A2 by using L1 (turn 62).

Example 3 (a). Mechanics-focused LRE.

Good Pair

> 58.A1: Yes..We..clean…our…toilets….hmm…after…that…we…make…our…
>
> breakfast…**B…R…E…A…K…F…A…S…T**…and then we cook
>
> our lunch…we eat…we cook…**C…O…O…K…E…D**…We then…9am…
>
> 59. A2: How about school?
>
> 60. A1: Then after that we start our class…we **start**…
>
> 61. A2: **Stuck**?
>
> 62. A1: No…start...(L1: Start)…**S…T…A…R…T**…we start…we line up and sing a
>
> song at 9am…eh 10am…**S…O…N…G**….then our teacher speak to them…the
>
> truth…our teacher Julian taught us to speak the truth…then teacher
>
> Julian…spoke…**S…P…O…K…E**…us the true…then we start our class.

Likewise, there were instances where A2 had corrected A1's pronunciations. Interestingly, it seemed that although A1 was able to pool in her linguistics and lexical resources, she wasn't able to grasp on the pronunciations properly. Aside from the mispronunciation of "*start*", A1 also had a mishap in pronouncing the word "*lunch*" (turn 14, 16). In Example 3 (b), A2 was seen correcting A1's pronunciations multiple times (turn 15, 17) until she finally captured it (turn 18). This pair appeared to complement each other very well and diligently corrected each other's mistakes in written and oral forms. The abilities to maximize each other's resources and draw in individual strengths have contributed to the pair scoring a *Good* band scale on the chart.

Example 3 (b). Mechanics-focused LRE.

Good Pair

> 14. A1: No 12pm our **lanch (pronunciation)**
>
> 15. A2: No…**not lanch…lunch (pronunciation)**…we stop our class at 1pm…
>
> 16. A1: lanch….
>
> 17. A2: No…lunch…not lanch…you ah…

18. A1: okok…**lunch! Lunch**! We ate…A…T…E, we ate our lunch…pork…P…O…R…K…and rice…R…I…C…E…then we went play…hmm…ah…then our finish lunch…we wash plate…

Aside from pronunciations, Example 3 (c) exhibited a case where one pair was deliberating over the positions of punctuations. As illustrated in turn 11, B1 instructed and reminded B2 to insert commas in order to separate the clauses and T-units.

Example 3 (c). Mechanics-focused LRE.

Satisfactory Pair

9. B1: Yeah…he never angry or shout at us…hmm…afternoon…at afternoon no one… we don't have teacher. We…we…

10. B2: We have social study right? S…O…C…

11. B1: I…A…L…ok…**comma…comma**…you must put **comma** here…after class… class finish we go back…go to YTL. We have English…hmm **comma**… until 5 o'clock.

12. B2: 4 o'clock. What did we (L1: You don't want to write what we learn in YTL?)

13. B1: Ok…we learn about English, Math, sewing …S…E…W…I…N…G, play Ukulele…that is what we do in YTL... *Cantik*!

In this study, the mechanics-focused LREs were relatively the highest in number, with the vast majority focusing on spellings. The limited proficiency probably contributed to the concern over the accuracy of the spellings. Example 3 (d) presents a number of spelling related LREs that were found in the transcripts and how the pairs sought to resolve the spellings.

Example 3 (d). Mechanics-focused LRE.

(i) *Good* Pair

28. A1: We at…YTL…we learn about…(L1: What did we learn)…we learn about …about…

29. A2: Art…you know how to spell art?

30. A1: Hahaha…**A…R…T**…that is enough laa…you ahh…

31. A2: Ok…ok…I will spell…hahaha…**A…R…T**…correct? When we finish we went back home?

32. A1: Yes…when we finish we went back home…we went back to school…then dinner…went dinner…**W…E…N…T**…went back to our school…ok…

(ii) *Satisfactory* Pair

B2: Ok…Thursday Chan Tuck come again and teach us Singapore Maths…Maths is not difficult…how to spell?

B1: **D…I…F…F…**

B2: **I…C…U…LT.**

(iii) *Weak* Pair

1. C1: On Monday we get up early…get up…hmm…get up…(L1: Faster, tell me what to write)

2. C2: Ok…ok…on Monday we get up early…and we shower…how to spell shower?

3. C1: **S…H…O…W…E…R**

4. C2: Ok…or washing…and we change our T-shirts…we wear…**W…E…A…R**… T-shirts and breakfast…**B…R…E…A…K…F…A…S…T**…breakfast…have breakfast…

(iv) *Very Weak* Pair

12. D1: In Tuesday, we learn Math right? How spelling?

13. D2: Hmm…M…A…T…

14. D1: **M…A…T…H…M…A…T…I…C…**

15. D2: (L1: I think so)

All of the above mentioned LREs constitute the fine examples of correctly resolved LREs. Most significantly, the pairs drew in their individual strengths to provide accurate solutions to the linguistic issues that they have encountered. However, there were occurrences where participants incorrectly solved their issues. As illustrated in Example 2a, the participants spoke about alternative lexical terms. Initially, C2 mentioned about lining up (turn 24) during the assembly and singing the devotion song. Nevertheless, C1 was very ascertained that there was another familiar word for lining up, which was "*queue*" (turn 25). Moreover, C1 reflected on the original term and suggested on a more sophisticated expression, one that he came across from listening to a teacher. The alternative word "*queue*" was immediately acknowledged and assimilated into the text. But it was noted afterwards that in the written text, although the alternative lexical term was successfully established, the pairs did not apply the new term appropriately. Instead, the outcome was "*After we had queue like devotion and we sang a song...*"; hence this was then regarded as linguistically inaccurate by the researcher and inter-rater.

Example 4 (a). Incorrectly resolved lexis-focused LRE.

Weak pair

      24. C2: We must **line up**

      25. C1: **Queue**…

      26. C2: Right…. Caroline always say queue…how to spell queue?

      27. C1: Q…U…I…U…

      28. C2: Q…U…E…U…

      29. C1: Q…U…E…U…O…no…no…Q…U…E…U…E!

      30. C2: We had…**queue**…like devotion and we sing…sang a song…and pray

Aside from the incorrect usage of lexical choices, some of the spellings were inaccurate as well in the written scripts. The Example 4 (b) indicated an instance of inaccurate

spelling. In turn 39, A2 wanted to mention that she has improved tremendously in her Mathematics' class. A1 assisted in spelling out the word "*improved*" to her partner (turn 40), however the outcome was incorrect as the word as spelled out as "*imporut*".

Example 4 (b). Incorrectly resolved mechanics-focused LRE.

Satisfactory Pair

> 39. A2: How about…in math…ok…but I improved well…
>
> 40. A1: I…M…P…O…R…U…T…
>
> 41. A2: Ok. I improved well because I am improved….I improved abit in English…we. were…
>
> 42. A1: Why you…

While some LREs were incorrectly resolved, there were instances where participants were unable to find complete solutions to their existing problems. In Example 5 (a), the *Very Weak* pair was seen to be contemplating on the verb form "*learn*" and "*play*". Both D1 and D2 wanted to mention about their evening activities. However they were not too sure on whether to write, "*we learn football*" or "*we play football*". In the written text, the pair was seen to have written down the sentence "*we play football*", but eventually the verb "*play*" was scribbled off, suggesting that the participants were unable to decide on the right form. Instead the sentence was left "verb-less" before proceeding to the next content.

Example 5 (a). Unresolved form-focused LRE.

Very Weak Pair

> 18. D1: Wednesday, we learn…hmm…we play football with others…
>
> 19. D2: We learn ooh…we what…what…about we learn one of the…from…or play football…

(Written text: Wednesday we football with other students)

> 20. D1: and in Thursday…we have white T-shirt…hahahaha…*aiyo*…I have no idea…I can't think…

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21. D2: In Thursday, we wear white T-shirt and black trouser…

Aside from the focus and outcomes of language related episodes, there were other variances in the transcripts. The variances between the pairs included the usage of L1 and other languages while deliberating the inputs and decisions. Educators might have concerns regarding the usage of L1 in the process of learning L2, however according to Wigglesworth and Storch (2003), existing literature have suggested that L1 can serve a number of functions in the process of deliberating and assist in the decision making process. In this study the usage of L1 during discussions were present because all the participants spoke and understood the Chin language. As seen in Example 6 (a), A1 and A2 deliberated on the steps to write and the decision making process was occasionally made in L1. Likewise, L1 was present when A2 was asking for information and assistance (turn 23). In addition, both participants argued and agreed in L1 (turn 24, 25). The L1 has been translated to English and the outcomes are presented as below:

Example 6 (a). Usage of L1.

Good Pair

23. A2: (**L1: Hmm…how about the next sentence**)…after we learn…ooohh…and after lunch we may…we join…(**L1: I don't know how to say it**)…up to lunch…(scribble sound)…after to lunch…(**L1: oh my God!**).

24. A1: (**L1: Wait, let me think!**) And after…we start our class again…C…L…A…S…S…again…again…and we learn about English (**L1: Are you ok?**) we learn about English…hmm…correct…question mark…question mark! (**L1: No…no …not like this…**)

25. A2: Ok…ok…(**L1: I will follow**)

Interestingly, while some researchers investigate on the usage of L1 in the process of learning, there were instances where the language used during the discussions were not L1 or the targeted language. Bilingual learners or trilingual learners may use another language to communicate with each other, provided that the other half also spoke and understood the other language. In this study, although the refugee learners spoke Chin language as their L1 and learned English as a second or foreign language, they were able to pick-up some *Bahasa* Malaysia terms and used them in their daily conversations. The refugees did not learn *Bahasa* Malaysia formally but due to the process of assimilation into the Malaysian society, expressions such as *-lah, -maa,* and *-ah* were present during the interactions. At one instance, one participant wanted to express his contentment after having written an idea successfully. As illustrated in Example 6 (b), the participant expressed his contentment by saying "*Cantik*" (turn 13), which basically means "*beautiful*" but in this context the word can literally be perceived as "brilliant".

Example 6 (b). Usage of other languages.

Satisfactory Pair

12. B2: 4 o'clock. What did we (L1: You don't want to write what we learn in YTL?)

13. B1: Ok…we learn about English, Math, sewing …S…E…W…I…N…G, play

ukulele…that is what we do in YTL. ***Cantik***!

In sum, in relation to research question three, the focused of the LREs were mostly on the mechanics, with a considerable amount of focus on the forms and lexis. The vast attentions on the mechanics could be due to the uncertainties in the spelling of the words, although the words are already embedded in their schema. According to Donato (1994), working in pairs showed collective scaffolding, where learners are able to pool in their linguistic resources and existing knowledge in order to generate ideas and focus on the language use. It was apparent from the dialogues produced by pairs

that during interactions, stronger learners tend to take charge over the task. However in this study, the participants were able to draw in their individual strengths and contribute to the task equally well. In other words, although the participants in this study are individual novices, they are considered to be collectively experts. Dobao (2012) stated that in such cases, there are no "identifiable experts". The collaborative nature in writing helped the learners to resolve problems and reach solutions that are beyond their individual competence.

Although there were instances of disagreements, the overall discussions were harmonious and pleasant without any major conflicts. In addition, parts of the linguistic issues were resolved without any withdrawals from the non-dominating party. Moreover, Wigglesworth and Storch (2009) mentioned that pair work provides advantages to the learners, as the more proficient learner would have richer vocabulary to write better. On the other hand, the other learners can benefit tremendously through more exposure to the linguistic resources and vocabulary.

The interactions indicated that the participants were able to discuss with each other due to the familiarity with the topic. Likewise, the participants were well aware of their surroundings and this assisted them to discuss on their points of view. The pair that scored *Good* earnestly discussed over the ideas and paid a considerable amount of attention towards the spellings (Example 3a, 3b). The process of collaboration allowed the room for improving their own mistakes, as evident when one learner helped in the spelling and the other helped in the pronunciations.

However, the *Weak* and *Very Weak* pairs' interactions were limited and it became very evident that towards the end of the discussions, their interactions were mostly vague in terms of ideas. The conversations were short and brief, and perhaps with limited proficiency and linguistic resources, the *Weak* and *Very Weak* pairs were

unable to proceed with further supporting details and elaborations. Below is an example from the *Weak* pair in their conclusion paragraph.

Example 7. Limited interactions

Weak Pair

> 44. C2: Caroline teach Geography….and grammar class
>
> 45. C1: What time we finish?
>
> 46. C2: 3 o'clock…
>
> 47. C1: Friday we woke up early in the morning…(long pause)….ok….we got science class right….
>
> 48. C2: Yes Science class from Sunway University
>
> 49. C1: ok finish…that's all….

4.5 Interview Data

The semi-structured interviews were conducted after the written scripts were graded. The participants for the interview sessions were selected from both groups (individual and collaborative), and the selections were mainly based on the band scales obtained. Three participants that scores *Excellent, Satisfactory* and *Weak* were selected from the individual group. Meanwhile, three pairs (six students) that scored *Good, Satisfactory* and *Weak* in their band scales were selected from the collaborative group. It was noted earlier that there was no *Excellent* band scale scorer in the collaborative group, therefore only the subsequent highest performing pair (*Good*) was selected instead. The pairs that participated in the interviews were the same set of pairs whose interactions were coded for the language related episodes. The analysis will be divided into three sections based on the themes developed:

<u>Thought Processes and Steps in Writing</u>

In response to the first interview question on *What went through your mind when you were asked to write a composition? (Were you thinking about on how to write a composition/ how to start/ are you familiar with the structure of a composition?)*, the

participant from the individual group (*Excellent, IE*) said that although he has previously come across some composition model samples in textbooks, he was not familiar with the structure of a composition. Extract I demonstrates how IE described on his knowledge in composition, coded as <kc>.

Extract I

IE: I know what is a composition, but I have never written one before this because teacher has never taught us to write any essays. <kc>

R: Okay. So is this your first time writing a composition?

IE: Yes. First time.

R: Okay…alright…so how did you manage to write about your school then?

IE: Hmm…I just write what I know. Like a story…you say to write story then I just write something like that…for the composition. <kc>

Similarly, the remaining eight participants mentioned about being unfamiliar with the concept of a composition and that they have never been taught to write one. Interestingly, five participants have never heard of the term "composition" prior to the task. When further prompted on how they managed to cope with the task without being familiar with the concept, the participant from the collaborative group (*Satisfactory, CS2*) stated that he wrote correspondingly to the requirements of the task. Extract II shows how CS2 responded in his knowledge of composition.

Extract II

CS2: I write the composition just like what teacher ask me to do.

R: Okay…so do you know how to write a composition?

CS2: Hmm…no…(*shakes the head*)…<kc>

R: Okay…never mind…don't worry, just tell me how did you start to write
    then?

CS2: I ask my friend…my friend just say to write anything about school from
    Monday…to Friday…everything happen just write only for com…

composition…yaya…<kc>

In addition, another participant from the individual group (*Weak, IW*) claimed that since he was told that a composition was similar to narrating a story, he diligently wrote a story about his daily activities without having any inclinations towards the structures. Extract III reveals IW's struggles to understand the concept of a composition.

Extract III

R: Do you know how a composition looks like?

IW: Hmm…maybe…I don't know…(*long pause*)…<kc>

R: So how did you write your composition?

IW: Story…I know story…<kc>

R: Okay…so in your composition or story …what did you write? I mean did you
   have a beginning…or ending in your story?

IW: Sorry teacher…I don't know…no…no…ending…no…<kc>

In response to the second interview question, *What did you first do when you were given the writing task?*, the participant from the collaborative group (*Good, CG1*) said that she first wrote down the days in a week and ensured that the days were spelled out correctly. In addition, she emphasized that by jotting down the days first would ensure that she does not miss out on any of the particular days. Surprisingly, according to her partner (*CG2*), it was important to not miss out on any of the days because they were afraid that their marks would be deducted if they did so. Extract IV demonstrates how CG1 responded in her content planning, coded as <cp> before writing.

Extract IV

CG1: I first write the days…ahh…from Monday…and then to Friday first…<cp>

R: Okay…good…alright then…so can you tell me why did you write that first?

CG1: Hmm…why? Maybe…because I think…ahh…I just want to know how
     many days to write…Monday to Friday a lot of things to tell…<cp>

R: Okay…so after that…I mean besides writing down the days, what else did you

do before you began to write?

CG1: What else…Monday to Friday…hmm…ya…spelling teacher! I ask my

friend about spelling…I spell and then we write the days…<cp>

On the contrary, another participant from the individual group (*Satisfactory, IS*) mentioned that the moment he began, he automatically wrote about himself first. Below is a short extract of IS's response in his content planning.

Extract V

IS: First I write about myself and then I write about my friends and then school.<cp>

In fact, the researcher noticed that the pattern of writing about oneself in the introductory paragraph was strikingly echoed by other participants as well, as evident from most of the written scripts. It seemed that the participants were inclined to self-introduce themselves first, regardless of the topic, before proceeding to the next point. To further examine on the tendency to introduce themselves on the first paragraph, the above participant was asked on the reasons for doing so. In extract V1, IS briefly mentioned:

Extract VI

IS: I always write like that. In classroom time, we always tell our names and age

first to the teacher…so I think very important to put name first…<cp>

However the participant was unable to further elaborate on the reasons given, suggesting that he is unaware with the concept of an introductory paragraph. Meanwhile, another participant that wrote in pairs (*Weak,*) said that he and his partner began to write from the moment they woke up and decided to narrate their "story" until they slept. As evident in their written script, almost each paragraphs began with them waking up and getting down with their daily chores (refer to Appendix)

In response to the third interview question, *Were you thinking in your mother tongue (Chin) while you were writing in English?*, all the participants mentioned that they did, although the degree of thinking varied among them. The use of L1 was coded as <l1> and the following extract exhibits IE's response on the role of L1 in his writing.

Extract VII

IE: I think mostly in English, but sometimes I think on how to write the next

sentence in my language. <l1>

He went on to give reasons that although he spoke good English, he wasn't used to writing in English for most of the time. Therefore when given the task, he had to "arrange his thoughts first" in his mother tongue before being able to write them out in English. Another example of the role of L1 in writing is shown in extract VIII with response from participant in collaborative group (*Good, CG1*).

Extract VIII

CG1: Thinking in English is ok, but then thinking in my language is much more

easier. <l1>

This indicated that she was more comfortable in processing the ideas in her mother tongue. Meanwhile, the participant from the collaborative group (*Weak, CW2*) mentioned that he thought about the words in Chin language first before finding the similar terminology in English in extract IX.

Extract IX

R: Were you thinking in your Chin language most of the time?

CW2: Yes…when writing I always think of the correct word…but I know words

in Chin…so…ahh…ahh…I think…I find the English words for it…ya…

like that *laa* teacher! <l1>

He further went on to state that he was just not used to thinking in English at all, suggesting that the usage of English outside the classroom was extremely rare.

Writing Concerns

In response to the fourth interview question, *What were your concerns while you were writing? (Were you concerned about the sentence structures/ number of words/spellings/word choices/grammar (tenses, prepositions etc.)?*, nearly all of the participants mentioned about being concerned with the word choices, spellings and grammar. The writing concerns were divided into two parts, focusing on the content in writing and challenges faced while writing. The concerns related to content (ideas, word choices, spellings and grammar) are coded as <cc>, while the concerns related to challenges are coded as <cl>. Extract X shows how participant from the collaborative group (*Weak, CW2*) elicited his concerns in writing.

Extract X

R: While writing, what worries you the most? For example, maybe ideas...

or words in English…grammar…anything like that?

CW2: I was worried about the words and spellings, every time…sometimes

I think I waste lots of time in…ahh…thinking if correct or not the

spelling…<cc>

When further prompted, he mentioned that he has only been learning about grammar and tenses for the past one year and has not fully comprehend on the parts of speeches yet. However he was able to recall several prepositions like "*about*", "*in*" and English articles such as "*a*", "*an*", "*the*" and earnestly applied those in the composition. While the majority of the participants contemplated on the word choices, spellings and grammar, the individual participant that scored *Excellent* instead stated that he had no major issues with the word choices, as he knew most of the terms. However, he did mention about having certain issues with grammar in extract X1.

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Extract XI

IE: I know most of the words and spellings, but I think some of the grammar

parts are wrong. <cc>

This suggests that he was fairly aware on his lack of mastery in the grammar part. In addition, another participant that wrote individually (*Weak, IW*) was quick to point out that he doesn't know on what to write about his school and the activities, suggesting that he was having issues with generating sufficient ideas for the content. This was evident from his composition as the ideas and supporting details were very limited. In addition, he concluded that the whole task was daunting, as he has not written a long passage in English prior to this task. Extract X1 demonstrates IW's concerns in narrating his composition.

Extract XI

IW: I don't know what to write about my school…do what in school…<cc>

R: Why is that so?

IW: Hmm…aiya…how to say…hmm…I cannot think…don't know what to

write also…very hard for me to think *laa*…nothing is coming…<cc>

On the other hand, the participant from the collaborative group (*Good, CG2*) said that she was more worried about the time taken to complete the task because she and her partner are " *very slow in writing and can't think very fast as compared to other students*."

In response to the fifth interview question, *Did you face any challenges or problems while writing? (What were the challenges or problems that you faced during writing?),* Meanwhile, the participant from the collaborative group (*Satisfactory,CS1*) revealed that he found it unusual to write with another student. At the beginning, he felt confused and required additional time to adjust to writing with his partner. When further

prompted, he told that he preferred to write alone because he was more used to it, as illustrated in extract XII.

Extract XII

CS1: I don't know how to write with a different person...I never learn before

    this…<cl>

R: Okay…so how did you manage to write the composition with your friend?

CS1: We just talk…I don't know about him…if he want to write or not…I just

    ask him and see…

R: How were you feeling then? Were you like out of ideas…or can't think of

    what to do with your friend for the writing?

CS1: Yes…I like confuse teacher…he also confuse…<cl>

R: Okay…so I understand you were confused at the beginning, but then how

    did you write…or how did you finish the composition at the end?

CS1: Teacher…I think I just talk to him for a while…and then I start to write…

    then after that I write…he write…that's all…

R: So you did manage to write the composition with your friend…right?

CS1: Yes…but then…ahh….

R: Ya…go on…is there any other problems?

CS1: Teacher…I don't know really…maybe…I think…I write better…<cl>

R: Okay…what do you mean by that?

CS1: No…no…I mean I write better…not with my friend…homework all

    we have our own paper…<cl>

Likewise, another participant (*Weak, IW*) claimed that he finds it very distracting to write with his partner because "*he was too noisy and always laughing*". If given a choice, he would rather write on his own for a serious task, even though he did enjoy writing with his partner because "*it was fun*".

<u>**Feedbacks on Writing Performances**</u>

The feedbacks were divided into four parts, the strengths in writing, coded as <sw>, weaknesses in writing, coded as <ww>; followed by positive feedbacks towards writing performances, coded as <pf> and negative feedbacks towards writing performances <nf>. In response to the sixth interview question, *What do you think about your strengths or weaknesses in writing?*, almost all the participants stated that generating ideas was their main weakness in writing.

Individual participant (*Satisfactory, IS*) said that he felt he was also weak in terms of spelling although he knew the right words to write. For some reasons, he always struggled in remembering alphabets. However he did say he was good in narrating stories because he has always had good imaginations and those imaginations helped him to write about his school. IS's response in terms of his strengths and weaknesses are illustrated in extract XIII.

Extract XIII

R: Besides coming up with ideas to write, what else can you say about your

weaknesses in writing the composition?

IS: I think spelling teacher…a lot of time I think I spell wrongly…don't know

correct or not…<ww>

R: Only spelling? What about the words?

IS: No…no…the words I know…just spelling only…not sure *laa*…because I

..ahh…not good in spelling teacher…sometimes I forget…I got learn before

…I know but I cannot remember…every time forget only…*haiz*…<ww>

R: Okay…never mind…its ok…don't worry so much on that first…but can

you tell teacher if you are good in anything else for writing?

IS: Anything good ahh…

R: Yes…anything that helped you to write better…something that you are

really good at maybe…

IS: Hmm…I think…I good at imagination teacher! <sw>

R: Imagination? What do you mean by that? Can you talk more about it?

IS: Imagination teacher…like the picture…cartoon…I can think of that and
then write a story…<sw>

R: Okay…I understand…so did you imagine about your school first?

IS: Yes…yes teacher…I just imagine about teacher Julian…teacher Barbara..
we sit in class and then play music…so I write like that…<sw>

For this question, most of the participants were unable to relate to their strengths in writing. They all seemed to acknowledge the fact that writing is still very much a new concept and there are yet more to be discovered on their writing skills.

In response to the final interview question, *What did you think about your performances in the writing task? (Was it good or bad? Why is it so? What can you do to further improve your writing?)*, the majority of the participants thought that they did not performed well and hoped that the compositions would meet the researcher's expectations. Individual participant IE responded positively, as demonstrated in extract XIV.

Extract XIV

IE: I did my best and I wrote as much as I can. I know if I study more I can
write better next time. <pf>

Meanwhile, the *Weak* participant from the individual group, who previously stated that he doesn't know on what to write about his school, said that he knew he did not do well because of the language barrier, as shown in extract XV. However he mentioned that he would read more and do exercises on writing, so that he can write better some time in the future.

Extract XV

R: So why did you think you did not write well for the composition?

IW: Because…hmm…I just feel like that…I cannot write longer…

My composition very short…<nf>

R: Is that so? What about the content of your composition…the things you

wrote in the composition?

IW: That one…ok only…but still not good *laa*…I very bad in English…

I cannot write in English…very hard…<nf>

In addition, the participant from the collaborative group (*Good,CG1*) said that although she wrote sufficiently for the task, it wasn't good enough. Interestingly, she further mentioned about the desire of wanting to write an English children's book in the future so that her little siblings can read the stories. The other participants also mentioned that they want to learn more on writing and they agreed that the only way to improve their writing skills is by doing more writing exercises. Some of them swore that they would read more after this experience.

In sum, to answer research question four, the interview data revealed that the participants were well aware of their struggles in writing. The low confidence level is also very noticeable as most of the participants were unable to figure out their strengths. Likewise, they perceived their overall writing performances were as not good enough. In addition, collaborative writing may not be applicable to learners that have never been exposed to collaborative learning. According to such individuals, writing in pairs was strange and can be distracting at times. The majority of the participants also voiced out the need to further improve on their writing techniques.

To conclude the data analysis, the first part of this chapter has presented the quantitative and qualitative results of this study on the effects of individual and collaborative writing tasks on refugee learners' writing performances. The second part of this chapter discusses the results obtained from the numerical and text data in relation to the theoretical framework and existing literature. Most significantly, while the

analyses from written scripts, audio recordings and interviews provided an overall picture of the participants' writing performances, collaborative dialogue and approach, this part aims to address the four research questions in detail. The second part of this chapter (consisting of sections 4.6-4.9) is organized according to each research question, and discusses the findings in relation to the previous studies.

4.6 The Effects of Individual and Collaborative Writing Tasks on CAF

(Complexity, Accuracy, Fluency)

The first research question addressed in the present study focused on the relationship between the types of writing tasks and three linguistics features (CAF) proposed by applied linguists in the field of second language research. The comparative analysis of written scripts produced by individuals and paired learners showed that collaborative writing tasks have positive effect on the accuracy of texts produced. More specifically, in this study, the texts written collaboratively have more error-free T-units and clauses than those written individually. Although there were no statistical significant differences between the individual and pairs in terms of accuracy in written texts, it was evident that texts written collaboratively had fewer errors. Similarly, previous researches have mentioned that those writing collaboratively produced more accurate texts as compared to those writing individually (Dobao, 2012; Storch, 2005, Storch & Wigglesworth, 2007). On the other hand, Wigglesworth & Storch (2009) reportedly found that although pairs significantly produced higher level of accuracy in the written texts, the individuals scored better in terms of having more error-free clauses. These results suggest the effects of collaborative writing tasks on accuracy is related to learners being able to pool in linguistic resources (Donato, 1994, Vygotsky, 1978) through discussions and resolve linguistic issues that are beyond their individual capabilities (Ohta, 2001), even among learners with limited proficiency level. This further contributes to our understanding on collaborative writing tasks in relation to

Vygotsky's (1978) theory that posits jointly performed activities do assist learners to achieve higher performances in second language learning through interactions.

Meanwhile, in terms of grammatical and lexical complexity, the findings yielded no significant differences for both groups. The findings for complexity were similar with previous studies, where there were no significant differences being recorded for both groups (Dobao, 2012; Storch, 2005; Storch & Wigglesworth, 2007; Wigglesworth & Storch, 2009). However, in this study, independently on average, collaboratively written texts have more clauses per T-unit and the dependent clauses for each clause were comparatively higher, which suggested an increased complexification. Since the production of T-units and clauses are determined by learners' knowledge in grammar and lexical items, it seems that proficiency level played a part in the complexity of the written texts produced for this study. This relates backs to Bereiter & Scardamalia's (1987) perception that aside from knowledge in writing strategies, techniques and skills, proficiency level in the target language plays a major role in determining the writing output. Nevertheless, Wigglesworth & Storch (2009) mentioned that collaborative writing tasks seemed to have no impact on the variety of complexity produced in their study.

In terms of fluency, the comparative analysis revealed that individual learners produced longer texts with more T-units and clauses. In the present study, both individual and collaborative groups were assigned the same amount of time to complete their written texts. However, previous studies noted that learners working collaboratively not only produced relatively shorter texts, but also they needed more time to complete their written tasks as compared to the individuals (Dobao, 2012; Storch, 2005; Storch & Wigglesworth, 2007; Wigglesworth & Storch, 2009). According to Dobao (2012), learners working collaboratively spent more time discussing, agreeing and arguing over the content and linguistic aspects while composing, which was evident

in the analysis for LREs. Hence, this could explain why texts written collaboratively are shorter in lengths but accurate, while texts written individually are longer in lengths but less accurate than the former. This suggests that perhaps in normal classroom conditions, collaborative writing tasks may require more allocation of time as compared to individual writing tasks.

In sum, the findings of the present study showed that the types of writing tasks do affect CAF. As a matter of fact, collaborative writing tasks do have positive effect on the accuracy of written texts produced. The positive effect relates back to Skehan's (1998a) proposition that second language learners may tend to focus more on the accuracy aspect of the tasks in order to accomplish the goals set for the tasks. However it must be noted that the level of complexity in written texts highly depends on the learners' knowledge in second language. Most importantly, the findings support Ellis & Barkhuizen's (2005) suggestions that complexity requires learners to experiment linguistically and the willingness to explore a variety of linguistic aspects beyond their knowledge is needed. In addition, time limit is a considerable factor in determining the amount of units and clauses produced in the texts for fluency. Therefore, in normal classroom conditions, educators should pay more attention in deploying adequate time when implementing collaborative writing tasks. With this, collaborative writing tasks may not be necessarily suitable if there is a shorter time limit as learners may require more time to complete their tasks. The summary of findings related to research question one is tabulated in table 4.7.

Table 4.7 Findings and Interpretation related to RQ1

Research Questions	Findings	Interpretation
RQ1: What are the differences in terms of fluency, complexity and accuracy between the collaborative	1) There is no significant differences between measures for fluency for both individual and collaborative groups	1) Individually written texts were relatively longer than collaboratively written text when measured independently. One of the contributing

and individual writing tasks?		factors to shorter lengths in collaboratively written texts is due to lengthy discussions in limited time.
	2) There is no significant differences between all measures for complexity in both individual and collaborative groups	2) Findings have shown that collaborative writing tasks have no impact on complexity. Generally, the level of complexity depends on learners' willingness to experiment linguistically and explore linguistic aspects that are beyond their existing knowledge in second language (Ellis & Barkhuizen, 2005).
	3) The is no statistical differences for the level of accuracy for both individual and collaborative groups. However, when measured independently, collaboratively written texts have more error-free T-units and clauses.	3) Collaboratively written texts are linguistically more accurate because learners were able to pool in linguistic resources (Donato, 1994) and correctly resolve linguistic issues (Ohta, 2001).

4.7 Quality of Written Scripts

In order to address research question two, the quality of the written scripts for individual and collaborative groups were examined in terms of task fulfillment, language and content. The quality of written scripts was determined by using the five band impression scales (*Excellent, Good, Satisfactory, Weak, Very Weak*) based on the scores obtained, from the Malaysian PT3 examination marking scheme for English composition. The comparative analysis for the quality of written scripts showed that individual group had better range of band scales as compared to collaborative group. In

terms of task fulfillment, both groups managed to produce texts that were consistent to the given topic. In this study, the composition topic " *A week at my school*" was specifically brainstormed during pilot study after the initial topic failed to be carried out due to issues with participants' coherence level. This relates back to Omaggio Hardley's (1993) proposition that writing through experiences allows learners to process existing information from the schemata into narrations. Therefore, it is crucial that writing topics for second language learners coincide with their knowledge of occasions, occurrences and specific happenings (Kurtz, Groden & Zamel, 1993).

However, results varied for both groups in terms of content. Although individual group had better range of band scales, the collaborative group managed to produce a variety of ideas and supporting details. Yet again, this finding supports the notion that learners working collaboratively are able to co-construct knowledge (Vygotsky, 1978) and strive to contribute outlines and ideas (Storch, 2013) for the outputs. But in this study, it was discovered that while collaborative group produced more variety of ideas and supporting details in their written texts, some of the ideas and supporting details were disorganized. On the contrary, although most of the learners who wrote individually produced less variety of ideas and supporting details, the ideas and supporting details were well organized. As a result of disorganization in ideas and supporting details, the sentence structures were also slightly incoherent in the collaborative written texts, which ultimately affected the language scoring. Dobao (2012) has mentioned that learners working in pairs and groups tend to have lengthy discussions during composing. In relation to this, the findings in this study suggest that due to lengthy discussions, learners writing collaboratively were able to generate a variety of ideas and supporting details as compared to individual learners. However, the possibility of having two or more ideas while discussing similar points may have inhibited the flow of sentences structures, thus resulting in the sentences not being

properly arranged according to the ideas generated. Another possible factor is the limited time frame as previously discussed, where collaborative learners might have had to rush through their ideas and supporting details in order to complete the written tasks. On the contrary, learners writing individually might not have had the advantages of co-constructing knowledge and pooling in linguistic resources to generate ideas, hence resulting in limited ideas and supporting details being generated. However it is possible that due to limited ideas, the individual learners were able to organize one idea at a time and properly elaborate with supporting details within the time limit. Meanwhile, in terms of variety of language used, since the participants from both groups have similar proficiency level, mostly simple and non-complex vocabulary was used in the written texts. In this study, the findings have shown that collaborative writing tasks have no significant impact on the complexity produced.

In general, the findings in this study suggest that collaborative writing tasks may not necessarily produce good quality of written texts or have better range of band scales. Although the variety of ideas and supporting details were better and there is evidence of knowledge being co-constructed, educators should be vary in terms of disorientation of ideas produced as learners working collaboratively may include too many irrelevant ideas for a single point. This relates back to Bereiter & Scardamalia's (1987) observation that proper organization of text and sentences enhances the representation of meanings, resulting in better quality of written texts being produced. The summary of findings related to research question two is tabulated in table 4.8.

Table 4.8 Findings and Interpretation related to RQ2

Research Questions	Findings	Interpretation
RQ2: What are the effects of collaborative and individual writing tasks on the writing performances of the refugee learners?	1) Collaborative group have better variety of ideas and supporting details in content	1) Learners working collaboratively are able to co-construct knowledge (Vygotsky, 1978) and strive to contribute outlines and ideas (Storch, 2013) for the outputs. But some of the ideas and supporting details were disorganized, hence affecting the scores obtained.

4.8 Analysis of Pair Dialogue

In order to further explain the effects of collaborative writing tasks on CAF and quality of collaboratively written texts, the oral interactions between the pairs during writing stage were analyzed to answer research question three. To address research question three, four transcripts that have *Good, Satisfactory, Weak* and *Very Weak* band scales were randomly selected for a detail analysis in patterns of interactions during writing stage. Wigglesworth & Storch (2009) have identified three phases of writing, namely planning, composing and revising. In this study, the analysis for the oral interactions revealed that learners were not aware of the significance in planning. Although time was allocated for the planning stage, the collaborative dialogue showed that learners began to write immediately without planning or brainstorming with an outline for the composition. The final revision stage did not occur as well as the discussions were ended almost immediately when the composition was completed. This can be explained through Bereiter & Scardamalia's (1987) insight that the lack of knowledge on how to process and organize information into texts is due to coherence issues. As a matter of fact, the authors mentioned that coherence level would not only

affect the construction phase, but also have similar impact on the revision stage. To be precise, planning and revision stage would be difficult for second language learners if they lack the coherence level to do so. In this study, the participants' lack of exposure to the factors mentioned by Bereiter & Scardamalia (1987) for determining writing output (writing strategies, techniques, skills and proficiency level) could have contributed to the planning and revision stage not being executed properly.

In terms of language related episodes (LREs), the analysis for outcomes revealed that the four pairs produced a total number of 176 turns of episodes, and the majority of the turns were correctly resolved (28.40%). The high percentage of correctly resolved LREs, as seen in Example 1, 2 and 3 in Chapter Four explained why collaboratively written texts contained fewer errors as compared to individually written texts. This coincides with Swain's (2000) notion that learners share equal responsibilities in seeking for solutions and resolving incorrect utterances for a better written output. Furthermore, Dobao (2012) noted that most of the correctly resolved utterances were directly transferred into the written texts, and as a result the errors were minimized. At the same time, the analysis of the paired dialogue revealed the focus of LREs was more on mechanics-form, with a percentage of 27.84. In this study, the findings suggest that learners writing collaboratively discussed more in terms of spelling, but less on form and lexical LREs. However, the results for the focus of LREs in this study differ from previous studies conducted by Dobao (2012) and Wigglesworth & Storch (2009). In their studies, mechanics-form was the least focused LREs and the participants paid more attention in their discussion to reach mutual agreement upon grammar and vocabulary. In fact, collaborative writing tasks did not affect the mechanics of the written texts and according to Dobao (2012), mechanics-form focused LREs are "fairly uncommon" in most previous researches. However, the findings in this study suggest that the distribution of LREs varies among studies most likely depended on learners'

proficiency level. Dobao's (2012) participants were intermediate learners in Spanish as a second language, while Wigglesworth & Storch's (2009) learners were advanced and have met the English requirements set by the Australian university. In this study, the limited proficiency in English may have contributed to learners focusing more on mechanical aspects, such as spelling and punctuations that they are familiar with. Additionally, as previously mentioned, the lack in vocabulary mastery and grammar could have resulted in least focus on form and lexical LREs among refugee learners.

Nevertheless, the qualitative analysis of the focus and outcomes of LREs indicated that higher performances in second language writing were the results of learners co-constructing knowledge and solving linguistic problems together. Hence, this is in accordance with Dobao's (2012) perception that individual novices are collectively experts when doing collaborative tasks. Yet again, this is also related to the learners' opportunity to pool in linguistic resources (Donato, 1994) and resolve linguistic problems by reaching common solutions upon agreeing (Ohta, 2001). Furthermore, Dobao (2012) mentioned that more resources and opportunities to correctly resolve linguistic issues are present when there are more learners discussing in the same group. Therefore the author suggested that perhaps the number of learners in relation to writing tasks might have positive effect on the outcomes of the written texts and this could provide new insights into our understanding in language related episodes.

In sum, the findings in this study showed that refugee learners shared equal responsibilities in the written texts and contributed to the majority of correct resolution in the LREs. In addition, the analysis of collaborative dialogue revealed that collaborative writing tasks do encourage active participation from each learner, as documented in previous studies (Dobao, 2012; Kim & McDonough, 2008; Storch, 2002; Wigglesworth & Storch, 2009). Most significantly, the analysis for oral interactions in terms of patterns of interactions showed that learners were individual

novices but collectively experts, as supported by Dobao (2012). Although there were instances of dominant/passive roles being undertaken by learners while discussing, Doise & Mugny (1984) has claimed that even though learners are grouped according to their proficiency level, the tendency to have one member with a slightly higher proficiency is inevitable. With this, perhaps the chances of having one learner with a better coherence level are also feasible. Nevertheless, the examples 1, 2, 3, 4 and 6 in Chapter Four revealed that having novice/novice pattern of interaction to achieve higher performances in second language writing is possible, even though Storch (2002) mentioned that expert/novice pattern of interaction is arguably the most conducive form of collaboration to facilitate L2 learning. The results of this study suggest that more similar research in relation to novice/novice pattern of interactions should be conducted to examine the focus and outcomes of LREs in various possible means. The summary of findings related to research question three is tabulated in Table 4.9.

Table 4.9 Findings and Interpretation related to RQ3

Research Questions	Findings	Interpretation
RQ3: What is the main focus of the language related episodes (LREs) among the paired refugee learners during composing?	1) The main focus of LREs is mechanics-form focused	1) The limited proficiency in English may have contributed to learners focusing more on mechanical aspects, such as spelling and punctuations that they are familiar with. In addition, the lack in vocabulary mastery and grammar could have resulted in least focus on form and lexical LREs among refugee learners.

4.9 Learners' Approach towards Writing Tasks

To address research question four on how do refugee learners approach their writing tasks, semi structured interviews were conducted to elicit the participants' thought processes during writing, writing concerns and challenges faced, followed by overall feedbacks in their writings. In this study, the analysis from the coded interview scripts confirmed that refugee learners have limited knowledge of composition. As mentioned before, due to interrupted schooling and lack of exposure to quality education, refugee learners do not possess the knowledge, writing strategies, techniques and skills to write effectively in second language narrations. This relates back to Omaggio Hardley's (1993) proposition that writing is not a naturally acquired skill; rather it is learned from formal educational settings or culturally diffused through social environment. In fact, the authors emphasized that writing skills need to be learned and practiced through experiences. However, despite having limited knowledge of composition, learners were able to narrate based on the given topic by using simple and non-complex language, as evident in their written scripts (refer to Appendix P-X).

On the other hand, the findings from the interview scripts indicated that due to having limited proficiency, the majority of learners were concerned with word choices, spelling and grammar. In terms of spelling, learners mentioned that although they knew the words, they were uncertain if the spelling was accurate or not (Extract X). Additionally, learners stated that generating ideas for the content was challenging. Yet again, as mentioned by Omaggio Hardley (1993), generating ideas in the composing stage is reckoned to be the most difficult phase and it can be burdensome to those writing in second language context. In fact, processing information before transferring it to written text is more complex as compared to spoken form. Interestingly, one learner was uncomfortable with the idea of writing collaboratively, citing unfamiliarity with such writing activity as the main challenge towards completing the task. Given a

chance, he would prefer to write individually. Therefore, this finding suggest that collaborative writing tasks may not be suitable for inexperienced learners and the right approach towards collaborative writing tasks must be taught by educators.

In terms of weaknesses, one learner went on to explain that he has difficulties in remembering alphabets even though he could recall the words, which prove to be another challenge when writing (Extract XIII). In general, majority of the learners perceived their overall performances as not good, citing language barrier as the main reason for their inability to perform well in the composition. However, the learners' negative feedbacks on their writing performances were partial reflection of their actual writing performances. The scores obtained spoke otherwise as some of the interviewees were in the *Excellent* and *Good* band scales for their composition. Perhaps the lack of confidence and optimism played a part in the overall negative feedback in writing performances. Nevertheless, the responses were positive when learners mentioned that they would want to improve their writing skills by reading more and practicing.

4.10 Conclusion

This chapter presented and discussed the results and findings of this present study. To briefly summarize, the results of the first research question, *What are the differences in terms of fluency, complexity and accuracy between the collaborative and individual writing tasks?*, revealed that there were no significant differences in terms of fluency for both groups and the lexical and grammar complexities were almost similar. In addition, although the ANOVA test results indicated that there were no significant differences in terms of linguistic accuracy for both groups, the collaborative group achieved better scores in all the accuracy measures. The findings for CAF were consistent with previous studies, despite the fact that this present study was conducted in a different L2 context. Most specifically, collaborative writing tasks have positive effect on accuracy as learners pool in resources to correctly resolve linguistic problems.

The results of the second research question, *What are the effects of collaborative and individual writing tasks on the writing performances of the refugee learners?*, indicated that both groups had almost similar accomplishments in terms of band scales. However when the scores were compared independently, the individual group showed better range of scores. In terms of the quality of the written scripts, the individual group produced better sentence structures and the ideas were well organized. On the contrary, the collaborative group had the advantage of generating more ideas. However, the comparative analysis of the quality of the written texts revealed that although learners writing collaboratively were able to co-construct knowledge and contribute ideas for writing output, the ideas were mostly disorientated and poorly organized. Hence measures to minimize such occurrences should be taken if educators would like to implement collaborative writing activities in second language classrooms, such as allocating adequate time for task completion

With regard to the third research question, *What is the main focus of the language related episodes (LREs) among the paired refugee learners during composing?,* the results showed that the interactions were focused mainly on the mechanics-LREs (spellings) as compared to form and lexical LREs. The limited proficiency level may have contributed to the participants paying more attention to their spellings rather than word forms and lexical choices. For language related episodes, the findings differed from previous studies in terms of the focus. In this study, learners focused more on mechanical aspects such as spelling and punctuation. The limited knowledge and low proficiency level in second language are contributing factors to why learners focused more on spelling. Their lack of mastery in grammar and vocabulary might have prevented them from focusing more on the grammatical and lexical aspects of writing. Last but not least, based on the final research question, *How do refugee learners approach the writing tasks*?, the interview data revealed that most respondents

have negative feedback regarding their composition due to their low proficiency level. In the following chapter, I will present the conclusion of findings and discuss the various implications of this research.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, the results, discussion and summary of key findings for this study were presented. This chapter concludes on the effects of individual versus collaborative writing tasks on the writing performances of limited English proficient students with interrupted formal education from refugee background (LEP SIFE), by providing an overall summary of the research and important insights into refugee learners' writing approach. Additionally, this chapter provides discussion on research implications and also recommendations for future research, based on the key findings and issues raised from this study.

5.2 Summary of Present Study

The present study provided the advantages and disadvantages of individual and collaborative writing tasks on second language writing performances. The study aimed to identify the types of writing tasks that can assist learners to enhance their writing skills. More specifically, the key findings in this study specified evidences and provided support for the benefits of using collaborative writing tasks in classrooms to facilitate L2 learning. However, the negative impacts of implementing collaborative writing tasks were also highlighted to spread awareness to educators so that measures can be taken to minimize such impacts on writing performances. One negative impact found in this study is that collaborative writing tasks led to the disorganization of ideas and supporting details in the content, resulting obstruction in the flow of reading. The poorly organized ideas and supporting details at sentence levels affected the quality of written texts produced. While learners were able to pool in linguistic resources and co-construct knowledge as mentioned by existing literature (Donato, 1994; Ohta, 2001; Vygotsky, 1978, etc.), the possibility of having two or more ideas for a single point is

higher. On the contrary, learners writing collaboratively were more successful in resolving linguistic issues and the written texts were more linguistically accurate, suggesting that collaborative writing tasks do have positive effect on the accuracy produced. Therefore if the occurrences for disorganization of ideas can be reduced, then collaborative writing tasks should have their place in L2 classrooms.

Meanwhile, the collaborative dialogue provided a platform for learners to discuss, contribute inputs, give opinions and correctly resolve the utterances for a better writing output, as evident in the language related episodes (LREs). In fact, the findings from the collaborative dialogue coincide with Swain & Lapkin's (1998) notion that learners are able to preserve the new knowledge and adopt the language used by others. Hence, such occurrences may not have been possible if learners were to write individually. In addition, the findings from the interviews revealed important insights into refugee learners' approach towards the writing tasks. Aside from limited knowledge of composition due to lack of opportunity to quality instructions, the confidence level in their writing performances is quite alarming. The majority of learners gave negative feedbacks, despite some scoring really well in their composition. This issue with participants' tendency to underestimate their level of achievements can be traced back to inferiority complex. The inferiority complex is a result of living conditions, oppressions in social environment and the status of being born as children of refugees. With this, administrators and educators dealing with young refugee learners should encourage and support learners to increase the confidence level and optimism while engaging them in suitable writing activities. As mentioned in the introductory chapter, refugee learners can benefit tremendously by expressing their thoughts and feelings on to a paper. The book written by Louise DeSalvo, *Writing as a Way of Healing: How Telling Our Stories Transforms Our Lives* can serve as an inspiration to those seeking to educate refugees or marginalized learners. According to the author,

traumatic students who wrote daily for 20 minutes were able to liberate themselves from inner conflicts after a few months. Most significantly, by drawing inspirations from DeSalvo's book, this research seeks to provide guidelines for teachers in implementing writing activities for traumatized and marginalized learners with the appropriate knowledge of writing genres.

5.3 Theoretical Implications

The present study provided a clearer understanding on how Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory of mind accentuates L2 development in writing. The peer-collaboration among paired learners confirmed that the process of interactions is an important input for the outcome of second language learning, as mentioned by Lantolf & Poehner (2008b). The evidences were demonstrated in the comparative analysis for written scripts and collaborative dialogue, where the process of interactions contributed to linguistic issues being correctly resolved. This theory could be applied to future studies to examine how correctly resolved language related episodes represent second language learning opportunities for learner. Meanwhile, the process of interactions enabled co-construction of knowledge with the generation of ideas from both learners during composing phase, as these learners are considered to be " active constructors" in their own learning environment. Hence, this confirms Vygotsky's (1978) notion that knowledge is constructed through a series of interactions.

The limited knowledge in composition, writing approach and coherence issues faced by refugee learners further supported Vygotsky's (1978) proposition that second language learners' social environment and the relationship they share within the social environment shape the students' mentalities. Therefore, cognitive and linguistic developments in the zone of proximal development (ZPD) largely depend on the learners' social environment. In fact, assistance is needed to fill in the limitations in learner's ZPD through social interactions. In this study, the collaborative writing tasks

allowed learners to pool in linguistic resources, or collectively scaffold and co-construct knowledge. As a result, learners had the opportunity to learn from one another and potentially expand their ZPD productivity.

5.4 Methodological Implications

This mixed-methods action research (MMAR) employed quantitative and qualitative research instruments to analyze the data. The 30 written scripts provided solid comparative measures for the effects of individual versus collaborative writing tasks on CAF and the quality of texts produced. Similarly, the audio recordings provided an analysis on the nature of collaboration and patterns of interactions among participants. In addition, the semi-structured interviews enabled more extensive coverage on the learners' approach and judgments in the writing tasks.

In this study, the audio recordings were used to capture the participants' collaborative process and interactions. Yong (2006) has mentioned that it is relatively challenging to decode spoken discourse and identify speaker through audio recordings. During the collaborative writing tasks, I observed the participants' attitudes, non-verbal behaviours and general approach towards the tasks while planning and composing. However, as leaners' non-verbal behaviours during the collaborative process could provide valuable insights based on situational context, perhaps the entire process should have been video recorded for this research. The non-verbal behaviours captured on the video recordings could enhance the spoken discourse from audio recordings.

5.5 Pedagogical Implications

On the pedagogical side, the collaborative writing tasks in this study enabled learners to have autonomy and self-directed learning approach. This is confirmed through the oral interactions where learners discuss and assist each other in terms of ideas, spelling, punctuations and certain parts of grammar. Aside from assisting each other, the self-directed learning approach and autonomy in the writing tasks are evident

from the instances where learners were willing to accept the ideas and linguistic aspects, whether it was accurate or inaccurate. Hence, collaborative writing tasks can encourage learners to share equal responsibilities, knowledge and skills in the writing tasks. With this, an implication is that teachers and educators handling traumatic and marginalized students can provide opportunities for these students to interact with one another and draw in individual strengths for collective scaffolding.

On the other hand, another implication is that educators implementing collaborative writing activities should be vary of the explicit behaviours exhibited by inexperienced learners. As mentioned before, the findings from this study suggest that collaborative writing tasks may not be suitable for inexperienced learners, as these learners may find the situation awkward and unpleasant. Therefore teachers should assist in the development of social interaction skills before engaging students in collaborative tasks. In addition, the ability to work with another person and the willingness to accept feedbacks should be developed as well. Aside from this, teachers and administrators can spend some time teaching students the concept of collaboration and the benefits of learning together before giving them collaborative writing tasks. In addition, inexperienced learners should be taught the benefits of planning and revising their written texts as well. Based on my experiences, another effective way of teaching collaborative skills is by demonstration. The demonstration method was an approach that I took for data collection II, after having failed to execute the collaborative writing tasks effectively in data collection I. The demonstration method with another colleague was successfully as learners were clearer with the concept and the role-plays that they have to undertake in order to complete the writing tasks. Therefore, having prior knowledge to collaborative writing tasks can ensure maximum opportunities for language learning. In addition, Yong (2006) proposed that educators could carry out conflict resolution management if the situation is appropriate for learners. Aside from

developing social interaction and writing skills, perhaps collaborative writing tasks can encourage proper conflict resolutions skills if the implementation is well planned. However, it must be noted that collaborative writing tasks are still an option in second language learning and learning collaboratively does not necessarily lead to higher performances or is better than individual writing. As a matter of fact, active participation in collaborative writing activities should be encouraged and not be forced on any student. In sum, the options for writing tasks should be left open and educators should determine the suitable atmosphere for effective collaboration in learning.

5.6 Recommendations for Future Studies

Based on previous recommendations, this study examined the effects of individual and collaborative writing tasks on writing performances in a different L2 context. The present study shed light on the educational and writing experiences of limited English proficient students with interrupted formal education from refugee background. Hence, this study contributed to existing literature with a different L2 context. Therefore, for future studies, researchers can conduct similar studies on other traumatic and marginalized population to increase the applicability of the findings to other groups. The findings need to be explored and fully understood from other perspectives and sources. Another valuable recommendation would be to examine the aftermath of collaborative writing process on individual's writing performances. Such studies could evaluate the effectiveness of collaborative writing tasks on second language development among individuals. In fact, the potential growth in ZPD after collaborative process is an area to be explored for future researchers.

Other than that, future studies can investigate more on novice/novice collaboration and to what extent the novice pattern of interaction can enhance writing performances. Investigating this aspect can contribute to our understanding in patterns of interactions in relation to tasks performances. Last but not least, researchers should

consider time factor when implementing collaborative writing tasks. As evident in this study, learners who wrote collaboratively produced shorter texts and the ideas were mostly disorganized as compared to individual written texts. Therefore, appropriate time factor should be considered for such writing activities.

5.6 Conclusion

The present study contributed to existing literature in second language writing with findings that are partially different within a different L2 context. Apart from that, the study provided important insights on writing performances and educational experiences of young refugee learners in a country of first asylum. As Dryden-Peterson (2015) have mentioned, prior educational experiences before resettlement have considerable consequences on refugees' post resettlement educational experience. However little attention has been given on refugee learners' educational experiences in countries of first asylum. Hence, this study is significant and valuable in addressing the gap in refugee educational experiences. Nevertheless, there are more possible angles to be explored in terms of writing tasks and second language learning.

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