L1 MEDIATION IN L2 WRITING WITHIN GROUPS OF LOW-PROFICIENT STUDENTS AT TERTIARY LEVEL

NOOR 'IZZATI BINTI AHMAD SHAFIAI

MASTER OF EDUCATION
UNIVERSITI UTARA MALAYSIA
2016

Permission to Use

In presenting this thesis in fulfilment of the requirements for a postgraduate degree from Universiti Utara Malaysia, I agree that the University Library may make it freely available for inspection. I further agree that permission for the copying of this thesis in any manner, in whole or in part, for scholarly purpose may be granted by my supervisor(s) or, in their absence, by the Dean of Awang Had Salleh Graduate School of Arts and Sciences. It is understood that any copying or publication or use of this thesis or parts thereof for financial gain shall not be allowed without my written permission. It is also understood that due recognition shall be given to me and to Universiti Utara Malaysia for any scholarly use which may be made of any material from my thesis.

Requests for permission to copy or to make other use of materials in this thesis, in whole or in part, should be addressed to:

Dean of Awang Had Salleh Graduate School of Arts and Sciences

UUM College of Arts and Sciences

Universiti Utara Malaysia

06010 UUM Sintok

Abstrak

Penggunaan Bahasa Melayu sebagai bahasa pertama (L1) semasa mempelajari Bahasa Inggeris sebagai bahasa kedua (L2) dalam kalangan pelajar berpencapaian rendah dalam Bahasa Inggeris di tahap pendidikan tinggi sentiasa diperdebatkan sekian tahun. Kajian lepas yang kebanyakannya menggunakan strategi kuantitatif, secara amnya menunjukkan kecenderungan positif dalam kalangan pelajar semasa menyiapkan kerja secara individu. Namun, terdapat keperluan untuk mengkaji secara kualitatif bagaimana bahasa pertama dapat membantu pembelajaran bahasa kedua sebagai satu pendekatan alternatif kepada pembelajaran bahasa dalam kalangan pelajar tersebut. Kajian kes kualitatif ini menggunakan teori Sosiobudaya (SCT) sebagai kerangka teori utama, di mana interaksi dilihat sebagai input yang mencetuskan proses pengantaraan terhadap fungsi pemikiran manusia. Oleh itu, kajian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji faktor-faktor penggunaan Bahasa Melayu (L1) dalam kalangan pelajar Melayu berpencapaian rendah dari segi penguasaan Bahasa Inggeris sewaktu perbincangan dalam kumpulan semasa mengikuti kelas Bahasa Inggeris (L2). Kajian ini juga mengkaji proses yang terlibat apabila Bahasa Melayu berperanan sebagai pengantaraan bagi membantu pelajar tersebut menyelesaikan sesuatu tugasan secara berkumpulan. Data utama diperoleh melalui rakaman audio, pemerhatian melalui rakaman video dan temu bual secara ingatan teransang yang dijalankan ke atas enam pelajar berpencapaian rendah dalam kelas Bahasa Inggeris di sebuah institut pengajian tinggi di Malaysia. Analisis tema telah digunakan sebagai kaedah menganalisis data. Hasil kajian menunjukkan pengantaraan Bahasa Melayu (L1) digunakan bagi mempelajari Bahasa Inggeris dalam situasi perbendaharaan kata Bahasa Inggeris yang terhad, kesukaran bertutur dalam Bahasa Inggeris, dan bagi memastikan pertuturan dapat difahami secara bersama. Proses pengantaraan berlaku apabila ingatan semula, pembetulan dan bantuan oleh rakan sebaya digunakan dalam kedua-dua bahasa bagi memahami arahan dalam Bahasa Inggeris, menjana idea dalam perbincangan berkumpulan, dan menyampaikan idea melalui penulisan Bahasa Inggeris. Kajian ini menyumbang kepada kaedah alternatif bagi pengajaran di dalam kelas, terutamanya terhadap pelajar yang berpencapaian rendah dalam penguasaan Bahasa Inggeris di tahap pendidikan tinggi, di mana mereka dibenarkan menggunakan pengantaraan bahasa pertama dalam pembelajaran bahasa kedua. Kajian ini juga memberikan sudut pandangan berbeza dalam isu kontroversi bahasa pertama dan kedua, iaitu polisi akademik dan peraturan pendidik perlu dikaji semula terutama jika bahasa pertama boleh membantu pembelajaran bahasa kedua.

Kata Kunci: Pengantaraan bahasa pertama, Pembelajaran bahasa kedua, Pencapaian rendah, Tahap pendidikan tinggi

Abstract

The use of Malay as the first language (L1) in learning English as a second language (L2) among low-proficient students at tertiary level has been a constant debate over the years. Previous studies, mainly using quantitative strategies, have generally shown positive preference among these learners while working individually. However there is a need to investigate by using qualitative perspective on how L1 may assist in L2 learning especially in groups, as an alternative approach to language learning among these students. This qualitative case study uses Sociocultural Theory (SCT) as its main theoretical framework, whereby interaction is perceived as an input to trigger the mediated process of human mental functioning. This study aims to investigate the factors for low-proficient Malay students' use of Malay (L1) during group discussion in English (L2) lesson. This study also investigates the process in which L1 mediation helps them to complete an L2 task conducted in groups. The main data is obtained via audio recording, video recorded observations and stimulated recall interviews on six low-proficient students in an L2 class in one higher education institution in Malaysia. Data was analyzed using thematic analysis approach. The findings show that L1 mediation is applied due to limited vocabulary in L2, difficulty in speech production, and to ensure mutual understanding of speech with one another. The mediation is achieved by employing memory recall, peer corrections, and peer assistance in both L1 and L2 in order to understand instructions in L2 task, to generate ideas in group discussion, and to present ideas into written form in L2. This study contributes to alternative teaching method in the classroom, especially towards tertiary level students with low-proficiency in English, whereby they are allowed to use L1 to mediate their L2 learning. This study also implies a different perspective in the L1 and L2 controversial issue, in which the academic policy and educators' rules need to be revisited especially if L1 can assist L2 learning.

Keywords: L1 mediation, L2 learning, Low-proficiency, Tertiary education

Acknowledgement

Praise is to Allah s.w.t. for making my path crossed with someone who truly deserves my very great appreciation, who has been infinitely contributing her knowledge, wisdom, time and effort in guiding me as a novice researcher through the path of joyous success. Assoc. Prof. Dr. Fauziah bt Abdul Rahim, my one and only supervisor has provided me with tremendous amount of work, assignments, reading materials, as well as useful techniques in doing research. This has made me realize that what matters most is not really the end product, but the entire journey that I have gone through.

I would also like to extend my thanks to Assoc. Prof. Dr. Ruzlan Md. Ali (Research Methodology), Dr Sarimah Shaik Abdullah (Qualitative Research in Education), and Dr Ahmad Azman Mokhtar (Academic Writing) for their advice and assistance throughout the lectures. I personally enjoyed the learner-friendly approach that they applied, and I am more than happy to recommend their classes to other students.

Finally, I wish to express my gratitude to those who have supported me financially, especially my former employers, UiTM Kedah and KLMUC, my current employer, UiTM Seri Iskandar, and MOE for MyBrain15 fund.

To my beloved parents and family; Roosilawaty, Ahmad Shafiai, Mohd Taufik, Khalif Irfan and Khalif Imran, this one is for you.

Thank you very much.

Table of Contents

List of Tables

List of Figures

List of Appendices

Glossary of Terms

GPMP – *Gred Purata Mata Pelajaran* (Subject Average Grade)

L1 – First language in this study (Malay)

L2 – Second language in this study (English)

MOE – Ministry of Education

MUET – Malaysian University English Test

PPSMI – *Pengajaran dan Pembelajaran Sains dan Matematik dalam Bahasa Inggeris* (Teaching of Science and Math in English)

SCT – Sociocultural Theory

ZPD – The Zone of Proximal Development

CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION OF THE RESEARCH

1.1 Introduction

Second language (henceforth will be referred to as L2) can either be acquired or learned, but both terms are controversial as it is difficult to determine whether one's proficiency in a second language is as equal as the first language (henceforth will be referred to as L1) (Denham & Lobeck, 2013). However, some previous works have used the terms alternately without any emphasis on the differences (Malone, 2012; Nazary, 2008). For easier discussion, this study will only use the term L2 learning as reference to the process of obtaining the ability in using L2. Furthermore, this study is conducted in a classroom setting, making the term "learning" a more appropriate word than "acquisition".

The influence of colonial era has led to English language being recognized as the L2 in this country and Malay language being the official and national language, or L1. Nonetheless, as years pass by, the standard of English has deteriorated in the urban and especially so in the rural areas where English is hardly spoken. In fact, English use is still minimal and mostly for school purposes (Hazita, 2006). Due to the limited practice of English within some communities in Malaysia, many students struggle to learn the language. Thus, there is a need to understand how students who lack the mastery of L2 learn the language.

1.2 Background of the Study

Education in Malaysia as structured by the Ministry of Education (henceforth will be referred to as MOE) has placed national examination as high importance and serves the purpose of measuring intelligence among students. In terms of English language teaching, it somehow leads to extra concentration on teaching grammar among school teachers rather than having communicative aspects of language learning (Normazidah, Koo & Hazita, 2012). When grammatical skills become the focus in language learning which then are tested in examinations, those who passed may enter higher learning institutions without having the ability to use the language effectively (Ambigapathy, 2002) in both spoken and written forms. To summarize, English language is taught in school to prepare students for national examinations, while the language is taught in tertiary education to prepare students for their career prospects albeit with many obstacles and challenges (Ministry of Education [MOE], 2012), especially in terms of communication practices.

The concern towards lack of proficiency in English language among young Malaysians is certainly reasonable. At school level, students' performance for English subject in SPM has been fluctuating for the past three years. Based on the GPMP (Subject Average Grade), English performance had decreased in 2012 compared to the previous year (Muhamad Iqbal, 2013). Although the performance increased in SPM 2013 (Maisarah, 2014), it declined again in 2014 (Juani Munir, 2015). In 2012, 51.1% of SPM candidates for English 1119 achieved the GCE O-level certificate (Bernama, 2013) compared to 51.37% in 2011 (Abd. Ghafar, 2012). In addition, only 28% of SPM 2011 candidates obtained the minimum credit for English paper

2

evaluated based on the Cambridge 1119 standard (Malaysia Education Blueprint, 2012). In terms of ethnicity performance as shown in figure 1.1 below, the SPM result for English paper in 2010 showed that Bumiputera, who are largely Malays, have the lowest number of students who scored at a level equivalent to a Cambridge 1119 credit or above, which is 23% compared to 42% Chinese and 35% Indian students (Malaysia Education Blueprint, 2012).
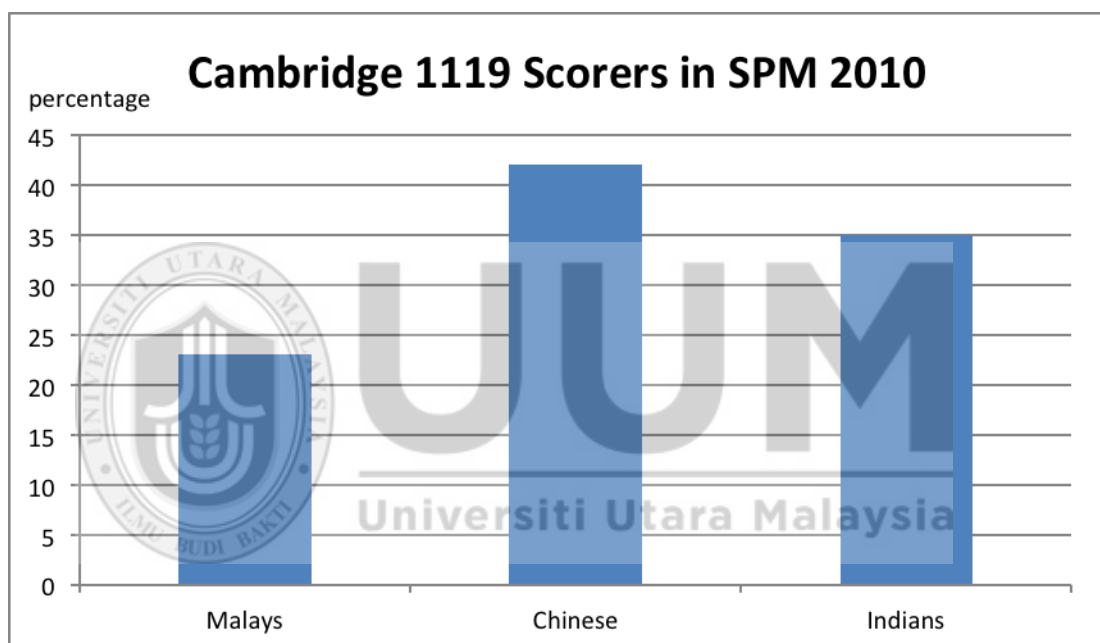
Figure 1.1. Cambridge 1119 English performance SPM 2010 based on ethnicity

As Malay students display weak performance in English subject compared to other ethnic groups, there is a need to investigate this issue among this target group. Hence, this becomes the reason only Malay students are selected as participants for this study.

By looking at the overall performance of English subject in SPM 2010 and 2011, there is a significant gap between candidates' performance in urban and sub-urban areas as presented in table 1.1 below.

Table 1.1

English performance SPM 2010-2011 based on locations

Candidates' Performance	Year	Urban	Sub-Urban
English Subject	2010	83.7%	71.2%
	2011	83.8%	70.1%

This is probably due to the lack of facilities and poor educational environment (Osman & Rajah, 2011) not only in schools but in the community as well, where there is less or almost no necessity for them to use English. Thus, students in sub-urban areas have a limited source and opportunities in practicing and mastering English language. It raises the question of how these students could possibly learn L2 with minimal knowledge and skills.

The MOE has been aware of the low performance in English subjects among Malaysian school students, thus numerous efforts have been done for the purpose of improving education. For instance, the teaching of Science and Math in English (PPSMI) was first implemented in 2003 with a purpose of assisting students' learning in Science and Math, as well as increasing contact hours in English, resulting in improved English performance (Isahak, Abdul Latif, Md. Nasir, Abdul Halim, &

4

Mariam, 2008) and the additional 90 minutes of teaching hours per week for English subject in 2011 ("Masa BM, BI Ditambah", 2010; Mustafa, 2009; Parmjit, Gurnam, & Noor Shah, 2009). To some students, these may be proven effective in increasing their language proficiency level, but not much can be observed towards low-proficient students since media has been exposing more on excellent school achievers, which indirectly leaves the society with less or no information on low achievers' performance in English language (Azrina, 2009).

This problem escalates as these students enter tertiary education and the inability to master English language will be difficult for graduate employability. There has been a slight increase of unemployment rate in Malaysia, from 3.0% in January 2012 to 3.2% in February 2012 (Dept. of Statistics, 2012). In terms of unemployment rate among fresh graduates in Malaysia, a total of 1091 students from Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM), Universiti Utara Malaysia (UUM), Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM), Universiti Malaysia Perlis (UniMAP) and Universiti Islam Antarabangsa (UIA) who graduated in 2009 were interviewed regarding their job status. It was found that 355 (32.5%) of them were unemployed when the interview was conducted (Jamal, Lim, Russayani, Fauziah, Filzah, & Ismi, 2012). In terms of ethnicity, earlier study by IPPTN (2003) also indicated that from 617 unemployed graduates, 85% of them were Malays, while 6.3% consists of Chinese, 5.4% other Bumis and 2.4% Indians.

Although there may be various reasons for unemployment, National Higher Education Research Institute highlighted in its research that 31 representatives from Small and Medium Industries (IKS) as well as Multi National Companies (MNC) rated lack of ability to communicate in English as one of the reasons for not employing fresh

university graduates (IPPTN, 2003). This statement is supported by 38.7% of the participating employers in a study who claimed that Malaysian university graduates still lack communication skills, and 25.8% of them acknowledged the graduates as lack of mastery in English language (Jamal et al., 2012). In fact, the MOE stated that poor English proficiency among fresh graduates has been consistently ranked as one of the top five issues faced by Malaysian employers since 2006 (Malaysia Education Blueprint, 2012). Considering the percentage of unemployed fresh graduates and employers' view on the graduates' lack of English proficiency, there is a need to review English teaching and learning process at university level. The need for such review is also driven by the researcher herself, who has been teaching English (L2) for more than seven years in Malaysian higher learning institutions. Encouraging students to speak English with their peers seems almost too difficult, and using Malay (L1) to demonstrate how *Past Continuous Tense* is used seems reachable to the students' understanding. Thus, it feels right for the researcher to dig into the significance of L1 in students' learning of L2.

Since the Malay graduates take the highest percentage of unemployed graduates and display weak performance in English subject in SPM compared to other ethnic groups, this study focuses on Malay students who are low-proficient in English at university level in order to help them improve English mastery as initial preparation for future academic and career path.

1.3 Problem Statement

In many L2 classrooms, teachers are practicing various methods, such as role plays, question and answer (Q&A) sessions, using multimedia, using objects and demonstrations, and language games (Divya, 2012; Fgatabu, 2012; Roussol, 2010). They would also encourage uses of signals or penalty rules to ensure the target language is used exclusively in class (Auerbach, 1993). Such practices by L2 educators are driven by their personal belief that that is how English should be taught (Nazary, 2008), besides being bound to the school policy that English must be the medium of instruction in tertiary classrooms (Auerbach, 1993).

On the contrary, numerous studies have shown learners' positive attitudes towards using their mother tongues in learning foreign languages (Ahlam, 2010; Al-Nofaie, 2010; Kavaliauskiene, 2009; Mouhamad, 2009). In fact, there were also educators who admitted the necessity of L1 in teaching L2 (Carless, 2008; Auerbach, 1993), hence making the use of L1 in L2 classrooms a controversial issue. Despite being prohibited from using L1, L2 learners still resort to L1, making it difficult for the teachers to prevent such practice (Carless, 2008). Since it seems difficult to segregate L1 from L2 classrooms, it is therefore necessary to investigate the reasons for L2 learners to use L1 in their interaction when completing an L2 task. This is the emergence of the first research question in this study.

In previous studies, some researchers have looked into the preference of using L1 in L2 classrooms among a large number of L2 learners, and the research designs employed were mainly quantitative (Dujmovic, 2007; Nazary, 2008; Kavaliauskiene, 2009; Mouhamad, 2009; Al-Nofaie, 2010). Due to the uses of Likert scales with

7

limited open-ended questions in their surveys and questionnaires, this study intends to support the construction of knowledge pertaining to the issue of L1 mediation in L2 learning by implementing qualitative research design. When quantitative studies reveal L2 learners' attitude and perception towards the use of L1 in L2 learning, this qualitative study provides the descriptive process of how L1 mediation occurs which is reflected from the remaining three research questions discussed below.

Numerous studies have indicated the need to use L1 when encounter new vocabulary items and understand difficult concepts in L2. Dujmovic (2007) found that the respondents claimed that L1 helps them to define new vocabulary items especially abstract words (90%), to understand difficult concepts better (81%), while 97% agreed that explaining complex grammar points in L1 really helps. In a different study, Nazary (2008) also found that the respondents in low proficient category agreed to the practice of translating L2 words into L1 (68%), using L1 to check listening comprehension (45%) as well as reading comprehension (36%). Similar results were captured in both Kavaliauskiene (2009) and Mouhamad's (2009) studies, where the use of L1 serves the purposes of translating unfamiliar vocabulary and explaining complex grammatical structures.

However, it is unknown as to what extent do these learners need L1 to understand new vocabulary items in L2. Assuming that the learners' concern is to understand educators' explanations and instructions to language activities, results from previous studies are again reviewed. In Dujmovic's (2007) study, although 52% of the respondents prefer the teacher to 'sometimes' use L1, only 22% prefer the teacher to give instructions in L1. On the contrary, only 22% of low proficient respondents in

Nazary's (2008) study want the teacher to use L1, and 31% prefer instructions to be given in L1. It is unclear of what 'instructions' in the above studies refer to, because instructions can either mean the medium of instruction, or instructions to language tasks. However, Al-Nofaie's (2010) findings have shown that 63% of the respondents agreed class instructions should 'never' be in L1, while 66% of them agreed that they would feel comfortable if exam instructions were in L1. To confirm this, Mouhamad (2009) stated that when asked about the need for L1 when learning L2, the typical response by the low proficient respondents was, "*Easily describe what I want to talk about and understand what the teacher wants*". Al-Nofaie's (2010) findings and the typical comment by Mouhamad's (2009) respondents clarify that low proficient learners' concern is to understand the instructions of language tasks and activities set by the teachers. To conclude, this study defines 'understanding instructions' as knowing exactly what the language tasks require them to do. This is how the second research question emerges in this study.

The necessity of L1 mediation is evident not only in higher learning institutions, but within primary school context as well. In their case study, Fauziah, Hood and Coyle (2009) noted that a primary school student could explain how he solved his Math problem only if he was allowed to speak in Malay, but not in English. Nurmin and Ismail (2005) had also observed the influence of English and Malay implementation as a medium in teaching and learning towards Malay undergraduates. The result shows that since English was made as the medium of instruction, it has reduced the score level of the students. Mouhamad's (2009) respondents clearly mentioned that using L1 allows them to easily describe what they want to talk about. Students'

9

reliance on L1 in their speech is also described by some L2 teachers who claimed that their learners would either speak in L1 when the teachers were not around, or refused to speak in L2 when requested (Carless, 2008). By revisiting the reason for emergence of the first research question which is learners' tendency to resort to L1 although being prohibited from doing so, this study intends to observe how L1 functions as a mediator to generate ideas and get them across during their group interaction. This is how the third research question emerges in this study.

The above discussion has mentioned L2 teachers' challenges in isolating L1 from the learners' speech, yet none of them mentioned about the use of L1 in the learners' writings. There are errors in writing caused by negative transfers, which involve divergences from norms in the target language (Odlin, 2003), and many L2 learners rated writing as the most difficult language skill (Juliana, 2005). Yet the teachers did not point out if there were any use of L1 words or phrases found in the learners' writings. Therefore it is concluded that unlike verbal interaction, L2 learners are still capable of writing in full L2 without the intrusion of L1 words. Verbal interaction is spontaneous unlike written essays, thus the learners have ample time to employ certain strategies in L2 writing. Wolfersberger (2003) had acknowledged the use of translation strategy within the L2 writing process among low proficient L2 students. However, the method employed was think-aloud protocols and the participants had to complete the L2 writing tasks individually in different sessions. The fourth research question in this study may be similar to Wolfersberger's (2003) study, except that the participants were placed in groups to observe evidence of L1 mediation within their interactions when transferring their ideas into L2 writing.

1.4 Research Objectives

In order to provide in-depth description of how L1 mediates L2 learning among low-proficient students, the research objectives in this study are designed to:

- investigate the factors that lead to L1 mediation among low-proficient students in group activity.
- explore the process of L1 mediation among low-proficient students while completing an L2 writing task as group activity.

1.5 Research Questions

Based on the above research objectives, four research questions are developed:

- What are the factors that lead to the use of L1 among low-proficient students while working in groups?
- How does L1 mediation assist low-proficient students' understanding of L2 written instruction in group activity?
- How does L1 mediation assist low-proficient students in generating their ideas in group activity?
- How does L1 mediation assist low-proficient students in converting their ideas into L2 writing in group activity?

1.6 Significance of the Study

The concern towards L2 learners in tertiary education who experience difficulties in language learning leads to this research, which is aimed to explore their thinking process by referring to the meaning and grammatical rules of their L1. From a different view, L2 learners are given the opportunity to use and apply their own

learning preference, as well as being independent in building their own information system rather than relying too much on educators' notes and language workbooks.

Educators of other languages may also benefit from this study as it provides a new perspective for them on getting a different approach in assisting students' learning. Some teachers do experience challenging situations in teaching L2 especially at the beginner level. Students who are low-proficient may probably require less or non-threatening environment in language learning, thus this study may provide some useful insights on whether the mediation of L1 could actually help them in coping with L2 lessons and tasks. However, there should be a limit to the extent of applying this method which needs to be taken into account. Although L1 mediation is applied, it is not solely the all-time applicable method for second language education. It functions as yet another alternative for L2 educators that strictly depends on the learners' proficiency level and within the situation when it is needed the most. It may also release the language lessons from the traditional way of giving and explaining notes taken from text and reference books and expecting students to memorize and have drilling exercises.

From a broader perspective, Malaysian educational system may have a different view on second language teaching methods. More exposure to the use of the target language seems to be the preferred measure to enhance the language performance of Malaysian students, while the significant role of L1 in L2 learning is rarely publicly discussed nor encouraged in any educational institutions. It is hoped that with the findings of this study, it will trigger an initiative by the academic administration and

policy makers to consider the mediation of L1 as yet another technique to be employed among language instructors in many L2 classrooms in Malaysia.

1.7 Limitation of Study

The term proficiency is quite difficult to be defined, let alone determining the distinctive characteristics of beginner, intermediate and advanced language learners. In education, definition of proficiency varies depending on levels, scales and cut-off scores from standardized tests and assessments. In detail, proficiency is defined based on achieving or failing to achieve certain proficiency levels determined by tests and assessments, ability or inability to demonstrate proficiency related to learning standards, as well as teachers being deemed proficient or non-proficient on task-performance evaluations (Great Schools Partnership, 2013). Similarly, this study defines low-proficient students differently depending on the participants who were accessible for this research. Since the participants were university students and also classmates who were taking English course in second semester, this study defines a low-proficient student as someone who obtained the minimal passing grade in a pre-requisite English course during first semester to be allowed to take the English course in the second semester. However, the minimal passing grade may differ from one institution to another since it is determined by the university. In this case, the researcher is following the description of low-proficient learners according to the university's description based on academic grades. Hence, it may influence the findings if this study is to be conducted at another university.

In addition, the participants selected in this study consist of only females because they are the majority in the selected class as well as to avoid gender factors. These factors will be elaborated further in section 3.4. However, since only females were chosen as the research participants, there can be a possibility that a study on male students or co-ed groups could highlight different factors or issues.

1.8 Operational Definition

Low-proficiency is perceived as weak comprehension and capability of using target language, as well as minimal grade for selected test or examination. In the university where this research was conducted, the level of proficiency is determined by the result of a standardized test and assessments in an English language course taken in the first semester, which is BEL120. The L2 learners are graded by merit, with A+ being the most proficient and C being the lowest proficiency grading (Tam, Kan, & Ng, 2010). However in this study, low-proficiency is interpreted solely by grades obtained in final examinations. Therefore, low-proficient students are referred to as those who obtained at least grade C for BEL120 as it is the minimum requirement to be registered in a more advanced course, which is BEL260 (Vincent & Tan, 2005).

Mediation is defined as the principle construct that is rooted in the observation that humans do not act directly to the world, rather their cognitive and material activities are mediated by symbolic artifacts, such as languages, literacy, numeracy, concepts, and forms of logic and rationality, as well as by material artifacts and technologies (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006). In other words, mediation is perceived as the use of languages, such as an L1, as a learning tool in order to allow learners' development

within the ZPD (Wertsch, 2007). Using the conceptual definition of mediation, this study interprets L1 mediation as any form of assistance for the participants not only to complete the assigned task, but to indicate any evidence of knowing or doing something that they do not know or cannot do before in the target or second language, by using their first language.

In general, second language (L2) learning is perceived as the way in which people learn a language other than their mother tongue, inside or outside of a classroom (Ellis, 2008). However, this study interprets L2 learning as the ability to use new knowledge such as terminology, pronunciation and grammatical structures, and the ability to construct writing task in English language within the stipulated time.

1.9 Conclusion

A significant number of L2 learners of different proficiency levels have displayed their positive attitude towards using L1 in L2 classrooms. Some teachers also admit the necessity of using L1 in order to explain some grammatical aspects, difficult terms and instructions especially to low-proficient students despite their perception of against it. Hence, this study intends to investigate how L2 learners mediate L1 in L2 classrooms by observing their interaction with peers in a group activity.

In the following chapter, the theoretical framework as established from the related review of literature is presented, while the methodology that explains the research design, the background of participants and methods of data analysis are described in Chapter Three. This is followed by the presentation and discussion of the findings in Chapter Four and conclusion in Chapter Five.

CHAPTER TWO
REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.1 Introduction

The issue of using only L2 and prohibiting the use of L1 in second language classrooms has been debated by many academicians that lead to numerous studies with either similar or contradicting results. Since this study intends to look into the use of L1 as a mediator in learning L2, it seems necessary to review a theoretical framework that supports the aim of this study. Vygotsky (1930), the pioneer of Sociocultural theory (henceforth will be referred to as SCT) explained the relation between speech and the use of tool, and this idea will be discussed further in the next section. Such relation has been connected with language learning by Lantolf (2000) but with the use of the term 'mediation' to define the concept.

The term mediation indeed carries different concepts depending on the field of study where it is used. In general term, mediation is used to find agreement or solution that settles a disagreement, or to influence or cause a process or event (Rundell & Fox, 2002). Law and business related studies use this term as a form of facilitated negotiation (Exon, 2008) in a multi-stage process to help involved parties to reach mutual agreement (Sgubini, Prieditis, & Marighetto, 2004). However, in psychological context extracted from the Sociocultural theory, mediation is referred to as the use of certain object or tool that plays an auxiliary role in psychological activity, which assists an individual to accomplish a particular task (Vygotsky, 1930). This definition of mediation is later applied in second language learning (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006; Swain & Deters, 2007) which will be discussed in section 2.2.

Many studies done on mediation specifically in language learning have shown similar finding, which is the acceptance of L1 mediation in L2 learning, which will be discussed in this chapter. Therefore, review from related studies are presented with an intention to provide the scenario of involved people's perspective in this matter, as well as to support or argue that L1 can be used as an alternative for students with less ability to learn L2. To begin with, it is crucial to acknowledge the concept of the use of tools or mediation from the perspective of the Sociocultural theory.

2.2 Sociocultural Theory as a Theoretical Framework

Sociocultural theory is based on the concept that human activities do not only occur in cultural context, but it is also language mediated. It was proposed by L. S. Vygotsky and his collaborators in Russia around 1920s and 1930s, which covers multiple subjects including the psychology of art, language and thought, learning and development. He also focused on students with special needs (Steiner & Mahn, 1996), and the combination of these subjects makes it a considerable theory to be used as a theoretical framework for this study. This theory claims that it is natural and necessary for children to speak while they act, which indicates that speech accompanies practical activities and also plays a specific role in carrying it out. Vygotsky (1930, p. 10-11) further explained by giving two important facts, which are:

> "(1) A child's speech is as important as the role of action in attaining the goal. Children not only speak about what they are doing; their speech and action are part of one and the same complex psychological functions, directed toward the solution of the problem at hand."

> "(2) The more complex the action demanded by the situation and the less direct its solution, the greater the importance played by speech in the operation

17

as a whole. Sometimes speech becomes of such vital importance that, if not permitted to use it, young children cannot accomplish the given task."

The above facts emerged from a situation observed by Vygotsky (1930) whereby a child who was asked to get a candy on the shelves beyond reach started talking to himself while trying to figure out how to accomplish the task. This talk, referred to as private speech, helped him not only to analyze his situation, but in a way became a mediator to solve the problem (Vygotsky, 1930).

However, moving into the setting of ESL classrooms in higher learning institutions, it is not common to observe a university student talking to himself while writing an English essay. They would normally sit in silence, private speech occurring mentally instead of verbally which makes it difficult to figure out what is going on in their mind when completing an L2 task. That is why the better way, if not the best, to observe how an L2 learner completes language tasks and activities is by working in groups. Further explanation on group learning is presented in section 2.3.

Humans utilize any form of tools and create new ones for the purpose of accommodating biological and behavioural activities, and in this case, speech and language are also perceived as a form of tools. It takes language use, organization, and structure as the primary means of mediation (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006). This theory explains second language learning in such a way that it takes interaction in social environment as the source of mental development. It considers the complex interaction between the individual acting with meditational means and the sociocultural context (Swain & Deters, 2007).

In the context of this study, social environment in Malaysia does not accommodate equal and adequate source of mental development to master English language, or rather, the low-proficient learners have limited access to such source. Therefore, they have the tendency to use their Malay language as it is the most easily available tool or perhaps a necessary form of mediator to help them in the process of learning English. To explain further on the significance of L1 as a mediator in learning L2, the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) needs to be mentioned as it plays a role in learners' educational process. Vygotsky (1978, p. 86) defined the ZPD as…

> …the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers.

In other words, learners may be able to perform better than what they are originally capable to perform, as long as there is a mediator that guides them throughout the process of completing an L2 task. In the ZPD defined by Vygotsky (1978) mentioned above, the level of potential development can be achieved under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers. Adult guidance may represent the role of L2 teachers in ESL classrooms, while collaboration with more capable peers may represent the heterogeneous group of learners in which the team members with more knowledge and skills share their advantages with the members who lack these elements (Lederer & Raban, 2001). However, since this study intends to observe L1 mediation among low-proficient learners, adult guidance were excluded. Besides homogeneous low-proficient group, the heterogeneous group in this study is selected only to see if L1 mediation still occurs within the group.

19
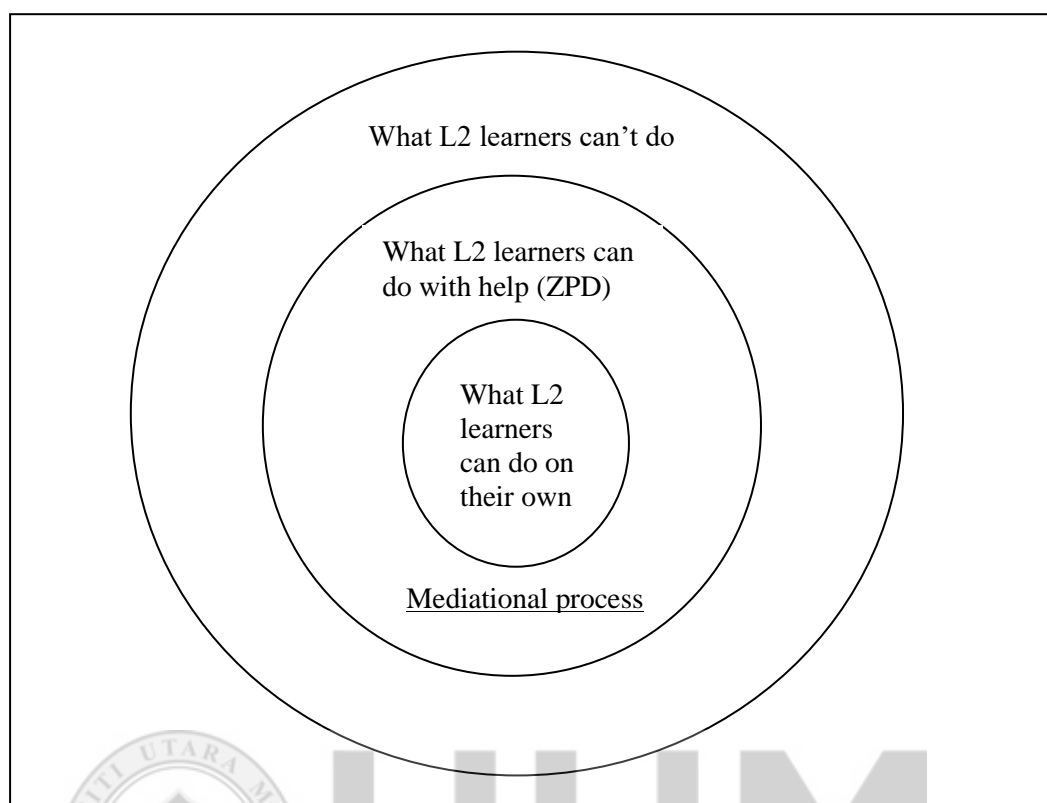
Figure 2.1. The zone of proximal development

Although ZPD was originally used to explain the stages in a basic learning process, it is often being associated with language learning as well. Ohta (2005, p. 506) had linked Vygotsky's theory of the ZPD with second language learning by redefining it as…

> …the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by individual linguistic production, and the level of potential development as determined through language produced collaboratively with a teacher or peer.

This re-definition of ZPD by Ohta (2005) seems to be related to this study as it focuses on classroom instructional setting and applies to social interactive context.

This may be true since ZPD reveals the emergence of cognitive development within social interaction, when learners gain assistance from more competent others (Kinginger, 2002). In relation to this study, the learners may possibly display their low proficiency level of L2 mastery if an L2 task is done individually. Nonetheless, they could be exposed to a different style of learning by being in a group of peers who would not mind if L1 is frequently spoken. This provides a less controlled environment, which is generally not approved by many L2 teachers, which will be discussed in section 2.5. Due to this idea, L1 mediation in L2 is observed among L2 learners with their peers, which can be done in group activities.

By assigning them to do activities in groups, L2 teachers are able to create social environments so that students could achieve the goal of the activities independently as well as by assistance from more competent group members (Connell & Charles, 2014). Having discussion allows them to reveal and share their thoughts and feelings, and being in the same society and culture may reduce the barrier of social interaction. Perhaps this reveals why L2 learners tend to use L1 among themselves, but switch to L2 when interacting with their teachers. Therefore, it can be concluded that Vygotsky's ZPD in his Sociocultural theory supports the significant role of social interaction, especially for the purpose of gaining assistance and/or input in language learning. The role of social interaction is discussed further in the following section.

2.3 Exploring the Importance of Social Interaction in Language Learning

Social interaction is undoubtedly crucial in language learning as it mainly carries the purpose of providing necessary input to the learners. Such input from social

interaction can be from parental speech and adult speech for first language acquirers (Denham & Lobeck, 2013), as well as native and non-native speakers, teachers, and peers. Since this study focuses only on L2 learners, this section highlights social interaction among peers and its role in L2 learning.

2.3.1 Collaborative Learning within L2 Learners' Group Work

The ability to interact in the target language is one of the skills that is emphasized and is deemed important for L2 learners. Interaction in a classroom can take place between teachers and learners, and among the learners themselves. However, Long and Porter (1985) purposefully highlighted the significance of group work and how it contributes to L2 learning by creating opportunities for initiating conversations between non-native speakers, or interlanguage talk. They mentioned that by allowing group work in L2 classrooms, it promotes individual involvement in the learning process at a more personal level, and creates a more positive affective environment. Group work has been a considerable option to observe the learners' L1 mediation through their interactions, and the study by Long and Porter (1985) made it clearer that group activities could be a suitable method for the data collection of this study.

Group work involves peers learning from each other (Jacques, 2000), and even some practices are quite similar with peer learning, such as cooperative learning and collaborative learning. Although these terms are sometimes used interchangeably, the differences are worth noted. Cooperative learning focuses on the processes of group interaction, individual skill development, social learning and management of the educational environment, yet collaborative learning focuses on exploration of ideas

22

and knowledge and learning to learn (Boud, 2001). Although it is possible for participants in this study to experience either or both types of learning, collaborative learning seems to fit in better with what this study intends to observe. This is because the main focus of this study is the process of learning that occurs along the way of completing an L2 writing task instead of the analysis of the written product. Collaborative learning allows critical thinking, problem solving, sense-making and personal transformation, the social construction of knowledge, which includes exploration, discussion, debate, and criticism of ideas (Boud, 2001). It only emphasizes on learning as the key concept and not education, with teachers as the facilitators for this type of learning. Having said that, the learners are given more control in their own learning, which enables group dynamics to take place. Group dynamics happen when one member responds to the needs of another. For group dynamic learning to take place interactively, Lederer and Raban (2001) stated that the groups need to be heterogeneous in terms of sharing knowledge and skills to occur. If that is the case, homogeneous groups especially among low proficient learners may need to rely on to L1 to mediate their learning during group work.

Group activity is perceived as a suitable way to observe their interaction in small groups. When they are given access to the appropriate environment, they will try to produce language and see how others respond, how others express meaning, ask questions to elicit data, imitate others' speech, use general language-operating principles to work out the language, and make the most of whatever they know (Emmitt, Komesaroff, & Pollock, 2007) which provides the opportunity for them to

23

explore the language by themselves. The following section examines how social interaction assists in L2 learning based on literature perspective.

2.3.2 Learners' Ways of Learning L2

L2 learners may not be able to experience progress in learning without exposure to the target language around them. Such exposure may include the quantity of English classes (Al-Nofaie, 2010), available reading materials and reasons to use English in daily lives (Hazita, 2006), though the amount of exposure and the quality of the input may vary. Putting aside such variety, with globalization, all humans are most likely to be exposed to languages other than their own. It now depends on how the input is processed and used to accommodate L2 learning. Some practices or techniques performed by L2 learners, which is derived from their interaction with their peers, include working memory, error correction, and peer assistance. Since learners tend to recall what they have learnt or experienced and relate with their present language tasks, the first technique to be discussed is working memory.

Proponents of Information Processing Theory in educational psychology view working memory as a crucial dimension to investigate the capacity to learn. In the Stage Model of Information Processing theory by Atkinson and Shiffrin (1968), working memory is the part of memory that is being processed actively while receiving new information (Lutz & Huitt, 2003). From another perspective, it is a concept that represents both storage and executively controlled manipulation of information (Szmalec, Brysbaert & Duyck, 2012). It has been reviewed by Baddeley, Gathercole and Papagno (1998) that there has been numerous supporting evidence

from adults, children and patients that working memory is predominantly a language learning device. Some studies have found significant positive relationship between non-word repetition and learning new words in L2 (see Cheung, 1996; Hummel & French, 2010; Service, 1992). Such findings have made it more convincing that working memory is substantially involved in L2 acquisition as much as it is in L1 acquisition (Szmalec et al., 2012). In the case of L2 learning among adult learners, working memory can be associated with memory recall that assists in language processing to perform certain tasks in L2 classrooms.

Individuals have different memory capacity and the amount of information that they can retrieve. From the perspective of Sociocultural Theory, Vygotsky (1930) view memory recall as a form of thinking in adolescents that enables them to establish and find logical relations, making memory recall capability as one of the elements in determining higher mental function, or potential developmental level. However, Vygotsky (1978) stated every individual has different potential developmental level that influences the size of the ZPD. Due to the diversity of information retrieval, there is a possibility of certain people making errors while others making corrections.

In any educational institutions, error correction used to be one of the most common practices by language teachers in order to provide feedback to students' performance. However, since student-centred learning has been introduced, students take full responsibility of their own learning progress (Lea, Stephenson, & Troy, 2003). Today, error correction is no longer initiated by the educators solely, but it is in fact strongly encouraged among the students themselves. Rief (1990) defines self-correction as the technique, which involves students in identifying and correcting their own errors. It is

able to foster skills development to regulate their own learning as well as it places more responsibility for learning on the learners (Asifa, 2009).

Peer correction, on the other hand, is defined as the technique of students giving feedback or helping out by correcting each other's mistakes (Asifa, 2009; Gower, Phillips, & Walters, 1995). From the perspective of SCT, peer correction involves interaction between students who are experts and novice, advanced and less proficient, or between comparable abilities. Through interaction during peer correction, students mediate each other's understanding of the nuances of the language that they struggle with. With the assistance from peers, the learners' ZPD are expanded where learners need to rely on each other to proceed, hence increasing their actual developmental level (Foster & Ohta, 2005). This technique encourages students to help each other and collaborate, getting all students in the process of correcting errors, as well as reducing their dependency towards the teachers. It also allows more advanced students to play a role in their peers' language learning by helping out the less proficient ones. In other words, correcting peers' errors can be one of the ways learners gain assistance from their peers.

In recent years, academic practitioners are encouraging student-centred learning which allows the students to take more responsibility and become active learners in their own learning process. This results in the introduction of peer assistance, which is referred to as people within similar social groupings who are neither professionals nor experts in the subjects taught, yet helping each other to learn, and learning themselves, by teaching (Cantillon & Glynn, 2009). This technique supports active learning in which students are accountable for in their own language learning

26

performance. It also promotes interactive language learning by getting the learners to participate in countless sessions of peer discussion and social conversations in the target language.

Since L2 learning involves interactions and how it possibly helps low-proficient learners to cope with the classroom activities, discourse and conversational analysis are the two possible options of data analysis methods to consider. Eventually, it has been decided that this study employs conversational analysis to explore the communication between L2 learners as they discussed among themselves in order to complete an L2 writing task. The following section discusses these two data analysis methods and the reason for the selection of conversational analysis.

2.3.3 Considering Discourse and Conversational Analysis

Both discourse and conversational analysis are sometimes perceived as similar in features (Guest, Namey & Mitchell, 2013; Hancock, Ockleford & Windridge, 2009). They are often used in the study of 'naturally occurring' discourse, which can range from conversation to existing documents. They are also perceived as linguistically focused methods, where it is suitable to analyze conversations between individuals that emerge from group observations and interviews.

```
                        Qualitative Data
                              |
        ┌─────────────────────┼─────────────────────┐
      Audio                  Text                   Video
                              |
            ┌─────────────────┴─────────────────┐
   Text as Proxy for Experience          Text as Object of Analysis
            |                                     |
    ┌───────┴────────┐                       Analysis of:
 Systematic      Free-Flowing Text      ┌───────┼───────┐
 Elicitation          |            Conversation  │    Narratives
    |              Analysis of:          │    Grammatical
 Analysis of:     ┌────┴────┐      Performance   Structures
    |           Words      Codes
 Free lists, pile sorts,    |         |
 paired comparisons,     KWIC      Grounded Theory
 triad tests, and frame  Word Counts    Schema Analysis
 substitution tasks      Semantic Networks  Classic Content Analysis
    |                    Cognitive Maps  Analytic Induction/Boolean Algebra
 Componental Analysis                Ethnographic Decision Models
 Taxonomies
 Mental Maps
```

Figure 2.2. Typology of qualitative research (Ryan & Bernard, 2002)

As how texts and documents are used to perform discourse analysis (henceforth will be referred to as DA), Ryan and Bernard's (2002) typology of qualitative research in figure 2.2 also views conversational analysis (henceforth will be referred to as CA) as using text as object of analysis, which in this study, the text refers to the transcribed conversation between participants.

Nonetheless, some authors explain DA and CA slightly differently. Fairclough, Mulderrig and Wodak (2011) defined the term 'discourse' as an analytical category, which describes the massive collection of meaning-making resources, and as a category to identify certain ways to represent some aspect of social life. In addition, DA is meant to make sense of what is being read, to understand speakers who communicate more than they say, and to successfully take part in that complex activity of a conversation (Yule, 2012), which is later analyzed according to more socially or politically relevant themes (Fairclough et al., 2011).

28

The term 'conversation' is interpreted by Have (2007) as people talking to each other merely for the purpose of talking, or can be used to indicate any activity of interactive talk, independent of its purpose. This definition of conversation helps to understand the practice of studying conversations as inspired by Harvey Sacks. According to Sacks (1995), the strategy of analyzing a conversation is by searching for any form of interactional effect achieved in a singular, real episode of interaction. This form of analysis will be useful if the analyst views the utterances as the speaker's form of strategy to achieve something, which in relation to this study, to achieve some sort of knowledge gains in order to complete an L2 writing task.

The initial studies by Sacks (1995) have become an inspiration for more academicians in recent years to develop various explanations regarding CA. For instance, Yule (2012) considers CA as a more defined type of DA, specifically the study of turn-taking in conversation. This involves taking into account any elements of speakers' attitudes, pauses, gap fillers, and gestures. Wooffitt (2005) added in his point of view, that CA focuses on the procedural analysis of talk-in-interaction, to seek how participants systematically organize their interactions to solve an L2 task. Although it has been mentioned earlier that DA and CA are often used in the study of 'naturally occurring' data, this type of 'less artificial' data is more suitable for CA especially if the researcher's intention is not to find out why people act as they do, but rather to explicate how they do it (Have, 2007).

Based on these differences, this study employs CA since it aligns with the aim of the study, which is to analyze and search for any sign of L1 mediation practice as a learning strategy within the group interaction of low-proficient students. In fact, the

search for signs of L1 use and its mediation in L2 learning has been done in previous studies as discussed in the following section.

2.4 The Use of L1 Mediation in L2 Learning

As part of its policy drive to make Malaysia as the international education hub for higher institutions in the region (Ministry of Education, 2012), English becomes the medium of instruction of private colleges and some public universities, which means English is used in almost all courses offered. In order to study the effectiveness of using English in a non-English course, Nurmin and Ismail (2005) had conducted a case study on the influence of English and Malay implementation as a medium in teaching and learning towards Malay undergraduate students taking Civil Engineering. The result shows that somehow it has reduced the score level of the students, probably because most of them have been using Malay since their primary school years with lack or limited English exposure. It could be an indicator that L1 as a medium of instruction has helped Civil Engineering students to learn and cope with the lessons, and when L2 began to be used in class, it became some sort of challenge for them to learn the subjects.

Another study, which can be related was conducted by Fauziah et al. (2009) within primary school context. It was found that when teachers spoke in L2, students may not be able to respond unless they are given a choice to speak in L1. Taking this assumption into consideration, coping with the lessons and understanding what is going on in L2 classrooms may be obtained if a little amount of L1 is used, and this does not only applied at tertiary level, but as early as primary level.

30

Numerous researchers propose the mediation of L1 in L2 learning because it is a natural and necessary activity that is going on all the time (Januleviciene & Kavaliauskiene, 2000), apart from providing necessary assistance in students' language learning in classrooms. Nunan (1999) emphasized that what students think and feel about the language is of great importance in language teaching and this should be taken into account in any course planning. It was added that since it is inevitable that language learners use their L1 as a resource, it has become their preference in L2 learning. This is supported by Kavaliauskiene's (2009) brief survey on university students that met with conclusions that all respondents customarily rely on their L1 in learning English, and more importantly the amount of L1 that they need depends on their proficiency and linguistic situations. Additionally, their autonomously generated reading comprehension exercises, summary writing and back-translation activities actually assist in raising learners' awareness of differences between English and their L1 sentence structures (Kavaliauskiene, 2009).

A study conducted by Dujmovic (2007) had also found that Croatian university students responded positively towards L1 use in L2 learning since it assists them in explaining complex grammar points and defining new vocabulary items. His study displays similar findings in Schweer's (1999) and Tang's (2002) research in Spanish and Chinese contexts. Schweer (1999) conducted a research on the use of mother tongue in L2 classes at the University of Puerto Rico. Majority (86%) of the university students who participated in the study had responded that they prefer using Spanish to explain difficult concepts. They also claimed that the use of Spanish helps

them to feel more comfortable and confident, to check comprehension, and to define new vocabulary items.

Another study by Tang (2002) was conducted among 100 first-year English major university students in Beijing. The findings of the study showed similar result with Schweer's study, especially in terms of how the respondents' L1 assists in their L2 learning. Tang's study revealed that 69% of the respondents felt that using Chinese in an English classroom helps them learn the language a little, while 22% of them responded that it helps them fairly much. Additionally, a significant 72% of them found Chinese useful in explaining grammar points, while 69% of them need their L1 to define vocabulary items and understand difficult concepts respectively. These previous studies lead to a conclusion that whether it is Spanish, Chinese or Croatian language, first languages are somehow necessary in English language learning. This conclusion could be similar within the Malaysian context as this study has attempted to discover, and supported by Nurmin, Ismail (2005) and Fatimah (2005).

One of the common ways of using L1 as a mediator in learning L2 is by doing translations. For further emphasis on translating activities among learners, Fatimah (2005) highlighted the benefit of translating words into L1 as an effective means of explaining particular aspects of languages, such as polysemies, cultural differences, grammatical rules and syntactic structures with which students have difficulty. Through this, teachers may investigate the areas of difficulty faced by learners, provide exposure to the distinctiveness of similar structures in two languages, as well as the different processes used to convey the same message (Adegoriola, 2005).

Fatimah (2005) added that by doing translation, L2 learners gain access to a wide range of language input instead of made-up sentences normally presented in L2 text books. The translation also gets the learners to play a more active role than teachers because they have to do a lot of translation activities leading to analytical thinking. More active role in learning perceives that the learners do the talking more than the teacher. By enhancing the learners' interaction, they are able to contribute their own thoughts to a discussion (Fatimah, 2005). These L1 benefits, however, were not among the findings displayed in previous studies (see Dujmovic, 2007; Kavaliauskiene, 2009; Schweer, 1999; Tang, 2002) in which L2 learners were asked for reasons they prefer the use of L1 in L2 lessons. This has been mentioned, however, by some of the interviewed L2 teachers by Carless (2008) who claimed that the students were talkative when using their L1, but less talkative when the teachers were near or asked them to speak in L2. In this study, the element of enhancing interaction among L2 learners may be a relevant theme to look out for, and to see whether it accommodates L2 learning.

Another study worth mentioned was done by Norazman (2005), who had conducted a study to investigate the strategies used by L2 learners to comprehend academic texts while reading for academic purpose. The study was done among five Malaysian students in Business Studies at an American university who have been living in the United States for several years. After the analysis, Norazman (2005) concluded that L2 translation into L1 was used when having difficulty in English vocabulary and conceptual problems of the ideas in the texts, as well as to monitor their ongoing comprehension of the texts. These findings are also found in many studies in which

33

learners prefer the use of L1 in learning L2 (Dujmovic, 2007; Kavaliauskiene, 2009; Schweer, 1999; Tang, 2002). Norazman (2005) added that the subjects also used translation as a way to memorize concept. In addition, Norazman (2005) identified six strategies of reading used by the subjects, which are self-monitoring, critical reading, activating prior knowledge, translating, evaluating, and previewing. From these reading strategies, the highlights of the discussion were on activating prior knowledge and translating. It was found that the subjects activated their prior knowledge if the reading material was academic text books, but they used translating strategy if they read non-academic reading materials. Since this study also intends to observe how the participants understand instruction in L2, the finding for this research question can be compared with the finding from Norazman's (2005) study.

However, it is worth mentioned that Norazman (2005) found the reason for using L1 depends on other factors, and the learners' proficiency level is not one of them. Although the other factors were not mentioned, it has been found that a subject who was more proficient processed the reading text in L1, while a less proficient one processed the text in L2. This finding contradicts Kavaliauskiene's (2009) result of the study that proficiency level influences the amount of L1 use, in which the less proficient learners require more use of L1 than the more proficient ones. Considering that Norazman's (2005) study involved only five subjects who participated in interviews and think-aloud protocol, while Kavaliauskiene's (2009) study involved 55 respondents in a survey, the contradicting results could have caused by the methodology employed by both researchers, possibly the use of research instruments and the number of samples in both studies. Therefore, this study employs group

observation as a method to explore the issue of L1 mediation in L2 learning among low and intermediate proficient learners from a different perspective.

However, despite numerous views and studies supporting the mediation of L1 in L2 learning, others have also opposed such approach for the reason of being a mental burden, such as confusion on the learners and leads to habit formation of always referring to L1 without really mastering the L2 itself. In one example, Loi (2005) claimed that using L1 as a source of reference in L2 learning would not work due to several reasons:

- Misconception that second language is first language translated word for word.
- Misconception that all language items have a direct equivalent in other languages.
- Misconception that all cultures categorize the world in the same way whereas in fact different cultures may view the world in different ways.
- Misconception that seemingly common items mean exactly the same, whereas in fact cultural meaning can often not be expressed in words.
- Some cultures may describe items, concepts and expressions with a phrase rather than a single word.

In a study by Loi (2005) on the error analysis produced by 150 form four Malay students in their ESL class, it was found that interlingual errors which refers to the interference from the native language, took 64% of the total errors on English prepositions. To summarize his finding, Loi (2005) mentioned that such errors were made due to direct translation without considering the grammatical rules in L2. However, it is interesting to note that despite the errors on prepositions made by the form four students, Loi (2005) suggested that interlingual errors could be due to poor grading of teaching items and faulty teaching. He added that such errors made by the

students reflect the teachers' failure in giving sufficient and accurate information by only providing the 'equivalent' meaning between L1 and L2 vocabulary, and not on the practice of translation itself. Loi's (2005) statement supports the need for this study to be executed in order to observe how L2 learners mediate L1 in their learning, and to urge the academic authorities including the L2 teachers and the policy makers to allow and assist L1 mediation among low-proficient learners.

It is also predicted that negative language transfer from L1 into L2 would take place in the learning process (Adegoriola, 2005). Language transfer refers to what the learners carry over or generalize in their knowledge about their L1 in order to help them learn to use L2 (Wang, 2009). Negative language transfer occurs when an L1 feature that is really different from L2 is transferred (Yule, 2012). This type of transfer is shown in a study conducted to identify and describe verb-form errors in writing made by 50 Malaysian students at the tertiary level. The study found that the structural differences between their L1 and L2 confuse the students, especially when they have the tendency to simplify the rules of L2 to reduce their linguistic burden or learning load (Wee, 2009).

Similar findings are displayed in the data from CALES corpus (Corpus-based Archive of Learner English in Sarawak), where the frequency of occurrence of a range of errors that exemplified negative transfer were visible (Botley, Haykal, & Monaliza, 2005). Although errors and mistakes resulted from negative transfer are more likely to happen among L2 learners, Denham and Lobeck (2013) would rather perceive it as a form of language learning, in which they are figuring out the grammatical rule of L2 and applying it generally. Moreover, Yule (2012) stated that negative transfer often

decreases as the learners develop familiarity with L2. These views on negative transfer, if likely to occur among the participants in this study, could possibly be perceived as merely a process of language learning. On the contrary, many L2 teachers are aware of negative transfer and view it as a hindrance to L2 learning, thus feeling reluctant to allow the use of L1 in L2 learning.

The disapproval of using L1 in L2 situations does not only come from the academicians, but also among L2 learners themselves, although it can be considered as quite rare in comparison with other related studies that showed otherwise. In one study, Nazary (2008) revealed that for the question "Should the teacher use mother tongue in class?" the percentage of agreement is below 25%, indicating the strong rejection among Iranian university students of the use of first language for better exposure to second language. They also provide negative response for question "Should the students use their mother tongue?" where majority of the respondents showed disagreement, while only 31% of them showed agreement to the question. Prodromou (2002) had also conducted a similar survey on 300 students, which showed that most students disagreed that L1 should be used when learning L2. In fact, only 22% respondents at beginner level agreed that L1 should be allowed when talking in pairs and groups, while only 38% respondents at intermediate level believed that L1 should be used when asking someone to translate a concept into L2.

As noted by the researcher himself, Nazary (2008) made an assumption that such findings were resulted from their teachers' insistence on not using L1 and perceiving it as a hindrance to language learning. Besides, it should also be taken into account that Nazary's study is quantitative-based, and the responses were close-ended without

looking into the reasons behind their negative attitude towards the use of L1, and how they managed to cope with L2 learning with minimal use of their L1. Hence, there is a need to investigate the reasons behind the students' preference of using or not using L1 as a mediator in L2 learning. This study basically aims to fulfill this scope in the research areas related to the use of L1 in L2 classrooms.

In brief, Prodromou (2002) and Nazary (2008) revealed contradicting findings from other studies that showed acceptance towards L1 use in L2 learning (see Dujmovic, 2007; Kavaliauskiene, 2009; Schweer, 1999; Tang, 2002), but only Nazary (2008) has brought up the probable influence of L2 teachers towards his respondents' view on the use of L1. Hence, it is suggested to look into the topic of this study from the L2 teachers' point of view. The following section provides findings of previous related studies on L2 teachers' attitude towards L1 mediation in L2 learning.

2.5 Teachers' Attitude towards L1 Mediation in L2 Learning

It is well understood that in order to master a language, having as much exposure to the use of the target language as possible would possibly help. In fact, L2 teachers are implementing various methods that involve the learners to apply L2 in class, such as role plays, questions and answers sessions, using multimedia, objects and demonstration, and language games (Divya, 2012; Fgatabu, 2012; Roussol, 2010) and at the same time trying their best to prohibit the use of L1 in their classrooms. They devise elaborating games, signals, and penalty systems to ensure the students do not use their L1 and justify these practices with the claim that the use of L1 will impede progress in the acquisition of English (Auerbach, 1993).

38

However, many L2 teachers in different studies (Auerbach, 1993; Carless, 2008; Roussol, 2010) find it difficult to maintain the use of only L2 in their classrooms. This is because L2 learners tend to turn to L1 no matter how strict the teachers forbid such practice. They have to, because their mastery in the English language is very limited, as mentioned in some teachers' responses. In one study, Carless (2008) in his interview with ten L2 teachers in Hong Kong secondary schools shared some of his respondents' revelation on the difficulty of practicing L2 as the sole medium of communication in the classrooms. One of them claimed that the students chose to speak in Cantonese when they initiated the conversations with the teacher, but refused to speak when they were forced to use English instead. Another respondent observed his students during group tasks in English, and found that the students tend to use Cantonese when having non-lesson interaction. The difficulty of prohibiting the use of L1 is again supported by another respondent, who realized that although he had walked around the classroom to remind the students to use English, they would use English only when the teacher was in near distance. Once the teacher walked away, the students returned to L1.

However, there were some L2 teachers who seemed to be accepting the necessity of using L1 in class, even though they were actually against such practice. Carless (2008) had also noted feedback from one of the respondents, who believed that it was acceptable for L1 to be used in class by the students, as long as they did not overuse it to the extent that it became a barrier to the development of L2 skills. The interview towards L2 teachers by Carless (2008) simply strengthens Nazary's (2008) assumption of the influence of L2 teachers towards the rejection or acceptance of the

use of L1 by L2 learners. Students who are being taught by teachers who prohibit the use of L1 may have less opportunity to mediate L1 thus they do not find it useful in their L2 learning. On the other hand, students who are allowed to use L1 in their L2 classrooms may have more experience in L1 mediation, thus they are aware of its usefulness in certain circumstances. From the discussion, it has led to the decision of not involving the presence of the lecturer in this study. It is to avoid any possible influence of the lecturer on the respondents' behaviour while group activities were in session, as well as to allow a free learning environment to the respondents.

Auerbach (1993) conducted a brief survey to TESOL conference participants asking the question "*Do you believe that ESL students should be allowed to use their L1 in the ESL classroom?*" The findings showed only 20% of the respondents agreed, while 30% of them disagreed with comments such as "*It's a school policy*" and "*No…but it's hard*". However, the remaining 50% responded as sometimes, with comments such as "*Usually not, but if I have tried several times to explain something in English and a student still doesn't understand, then I allow another student who speaks the same language to explain in that language*", "*They're going to do it anyway*", and "*As a last resort*". This indicates that L1 is allowed only when explanation in L2 fails, and it is done only in student-student interaction instead of teacher-student interaction. To conclude Auerbach's (1993) findings, the respondents are aware of the need to use of L1 when students are learning L2, but depending on its necessity.

In a different study, three school teachers from Al Shola Private School were found to be implementing a minor use of Arabic only when the meaning of words was hard for students to comprehend (Roussol, 2010). Roussol (2010) commented that the teacher

did not only help the students to understand more easily, but this practice had saved the teacher's time and effort as well. Other teachers also seemed to be using Arabic for the purpose of discipline and classroom management, as well as encouraging shy students to participate in class discussions and activities. It is observed in Roussol's (2010) study that some teachers personally did not prefer using L1 in L2 classrooms, but sometimes it turned out to be useful in order to explain difficult vocabulary or contexts to save time.

Based on this information, it can be concluded that many L2 teachers hold on to the L2-only approach when teaching the language. They have also admitted that they prohibit the use of L1 among their students, and have tried hard to maintain it. There is a relevance to L2 teachers' avoidance of allowing such practice among students, considering Loi's (2005) finding on the error analysis and the data obtained from the CALES corpus by Botley et al. (2005). Since the error analysis and CALES corpus data were made and obtained using L2 learners' written works, it inspires this study to also choose writing task to be assigned to the participants. Besides written works being the data analyzed from previous studies, other reasons for choosing writing task will be explained further in the following section.

2.6 Writing Task for L2 Learners

It is made compulsory to all Malaysian university students to sit for Malaysian University English Test (MUET). Its main purpose is to measure the English language proficiency of those who are planning to pursue first degrees in Malaysian universities

41

(Chuah, Evanson, & Fatimah, 2010). This proficiency measurement is conducted by evaluating four language skills, which are reading, writing, listening and speaking.

In this study, writing task had been assigned to the participants instead of other language tasks. To justify the selection of task, the elements assessed in all four language skills were presented in the MUET syllabus and test specifications table as displayed in appendix A (Malaysian Examinations Council, 2006). In summary, listening and reading tasks are mainly used to assess students' ability to comprehend various types of oral and written texts, which requires a wide range of vocabulary knowledge and analytical thinking. Speaking tasks, on the other hand, may seem to be a better option because they are used to assess students' ability to take part in group discussions on a wide range of contemporary issues. However, the limitation of this kind of task is that it is a speaking task, thus grammatical structure is evaluated individually depending on the speaker. Additionally, students might tend to focus more on the topic of discussion, present and argue on certain ideas rather than talk about whether they use grammatically correct sentences or not.

Similar to speaking task, writing task is used to assess students' ability to write various types of texts. In order to achieve this, students need to consider numerous aspects in a language, ranging from correct spelling and mechanics, grammar, sentence structures, vocabulary and expressions, as well as develop and organize ideas. Considering many elements that L2 learners need to pay attention to when writing, it is understood if writing in L2 is not commonly favoured. In terms of the attitude of tertiary level students towards English writing, Juliana (2005) who conducted a survey to 47 international students in Malaysia found that writing is one

of the least frequent activities they are involved in, not only in their daily life, but during learning hours in college as well. To further support the need to select writing task for this study, Juliana (2005) mentioned that her respondents rated writing as the most difficult language skill compared to listening, reading and speaking. Another study also indicates similar findings, in which students are being apprehensive and have negative attitude towards general writing and academic writing (Noriah, Suhaidi, Intan Safinas, Dhayapari, & Indrani, 2010). The complexity of the writing process is displayed by Flower and Hayes (1981) in the form of Writing Process Model.
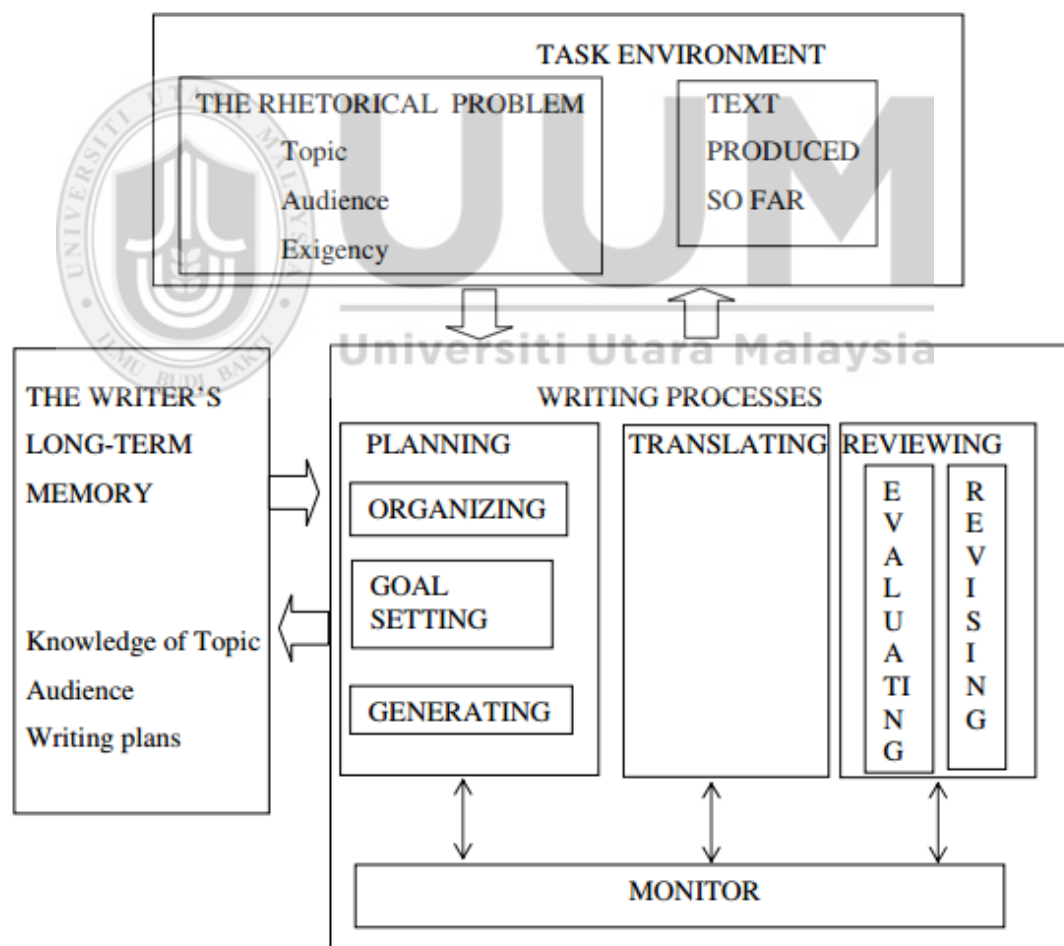
Figure 2.3. Writing process model (Flower & Hayes, 1981)

As shown in figure 2.3, the three major components of the model are the writing processes, long-term memory and task environment. The writing processes involve planning, translating, reviewing and monitoring. The planning process involves generating ideas, organizing information and setting the goal. This process is followed by translating process, where the learners then translate the generated ideas into written form in L2. Finally, the written work is reviewed, evaluated and revised (Flower & Hayes, 1981). Although the writing process model highlights on three major components, this study only looks into the first two components, which are the writing process and long-term memory. This is because these components can be related to the SCT as the theoretical framework of this study. For instance, the ability to recall memory is perceived by Vygotsky (1930) as a form of thinking that enables learners to establish and find logical relations which signify a higher mental function.

Within the writing processes, this study employs the element of mediation to enhance the planning, translating, reviewing and monitoring stages. The element of mediation can be in the form of L1 as the source of reference especially during the planning and translating stage. As social interaction is significant in human mental development, the inclusion of L2 learners' interaction with their peers during the writing construction is also necessary which is not applicable in studies by Loi (2005) and Botley et al. (2005). For example, Loi's (2005) study were based on error analysis found in writings produced individually by the L2 learners, which means the element of social interaction during the process of producing the written work was not taken into account. When writing was done individually, L1 was possibly the only source for these learners to depend on, hence resulting in negative transfers of L1 into L2

44

writing as shown in Loi's (2005) findings. Since writing is perceived as being difficult among tertiary level students, this study uses English writing for group activity in order to obtain the research data. In addition, writing task can be a collaborative task, which makes it observable for a researcher to seek how L1 is mediated for L2 within a group of L2 learners.

2.7 Conclusion

It is understood that getting guidance from L2 teachers and more capable peers allows L2 learners to do something that they could not do alone as proposed by Vygotsky (1978) in the SCT, especially in L2 writing which is perceived by many L2 learners as the most difficult language skill. The Writing Process Model by Flower and Hayes (1981) indicates the need for L2 learners to have knowledge on the given topic, generate and organize ideas in the planning stage, as well as translate and revise their written work. With limitation of mastery in L2, the guidance by the teachers are given only in L2 and when there is little or no help from their more capable peers, the most natural thing for them to do is to resort to L1 as their reference or a mediator to complete L2 writing. Judging by the results of questionnaires and surveys from numerous past studies which found low proficient learners' claims of the benefits of using L1 in learning L2, this study provides detailed descriptions on how L1 mediates L2 learning especially during group discussion to complete an L2 writing task.

CHAPTER THREE
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents in detail the methodology applied in the study, beginning with a brief introduction to the selected research design, a short description of the target participants, the sample and sampling technique that responds to the research objectives, as well as the two research instruments to be used. In addition, this chapter also includes a detailed description on data collection procedure as well as explaining how the analysis was done once the data was obtained.

3.2 Research Design

According to Yin (2009), selecting a research design depends on the research questions. Since this study intends to explain why and how L1 is mediated in L2 group activity in L2 classrooms, descriptive case study is selected as the relevant method.

Descriptive case study method is selected because it is suitable for answering research questions of how and why, as well as investigating events that are occurring in a contemporary context (Farquhar, 2012). In addition, it seems relevant to conduct descriptive case study as it is used to understand and describe a unique group (Chua, 2012), which in this study are low-proficient students and their way of using L1 as a mediator in learning L2. Therefore, the data are analyzed using conversational analysis since it aims at providing a thorough description of interaction, as well as the elements of silences, body gestures and facial expressions (Yule, 2012).

3.3 Quality and Ethics in Research

Before the procedure of data collection, the researcher has considered the ethical conduct as it is somehow significant in a research. Ethic is important as it promotes the aims of research, such as avoiding possible errors, falsifying or misrepresenting research data. Ethical standards also promote values essential to collaborative work, such as trust, accountability, and mutual respect, to name a few (Resnik, 2010). Orb, Eisenhauer and Wynaden (2001) explained that a researcher has the obligation to anticipate the possible outcomes of a study and to explain both benefits and potential harm to the participants. In this section, some ethical principles as well as measures taken to establish the validity and reliability of this study will be explained.

3.3.1 Autonomy

According to Scott and Garner (2013), autonomy in effect means that the participants must give informed consent and be able to understand their actions in participating in the research. In regards to this study, the participants were personally approached by the researcher to ask for their agreement to be involved in this study. Informed consent was given by explaining the purpose of the study and how it was conducted. They understood that they were free to take part as well as to leave the project at no cost.

3.3.2 Anonymity

Anonymity is defined as the confidentiality of the participants' identities kept by the researcher (Chua, 2012). In this study, the researcher gave assurance that the identities of all six participants would remain anonymous, be it within the higher learning

47

institution where they were studying, as well as in the report. Anonymity needs to be kept as one of the ways to protect the participants from any negative effects that may occur before, during and after the research process (Chua, 2012). It is also to enable the participants to feel safer while taking part in the research and responding during interviews (Rubin & Babbie, 2010). Additionally, since the researcher also happens to be the English lecturer for these participants, it may also help the researcher to remain neutral and avoid any potential biasness when analyzing the data. Hence, code S1 to S6 is used in replacement of the participants' names. The audio and video recordings would only be viewed by selective people whom are perceived to bring no potential harm to the participants.

3.3.3 Validity and Trustworthiness

Creswell (2014b) stated that validity involves determining the accuracy of the findings by employing certain procedures, while Maxwell (1996) perceived validity as ensuring the description, conclusion, explanation and interpretation is made credible. Realizing the need for establishing validity of results in this study, threats to the findings were identified, followed by actions taken to minimize these threats.

The researcher's concern in this study is the tendency for participants to behave in a controlled manner due to their awareness of being observed, rather than to behave naturally. Therefore, a measure taken was to limit the details of this research to avoid any tendency of behaviour control by the participants. They were informed that the purpose of this study was merely to observe their interaction within group discussion to complete an English writing task. However, the main focus of the study, which is to

observe the ways Malay language is used as a mediator during the group discussion (if used), was not informed in order to create the most natural group discussion as possible. It is relevant in the researcher's point of view that the main focus of the observation was not informed to avoid any tendency by the participants to purposefully overuse or underuse Malay and/or English languages as a result of knowing what was really being observed.

For the same reason, another measure taken was by familiarizing the participants with audio and video recording devices. Video recording device has been set up at least once a week in class in advance of the scheduled observation, especially when group activities were in session to familiarize them with the existence of the equipment around them. The device was purposely placed on the lecturer's desk facing the students instead of with them to make it less visually intrusive (Bowman, 1994). Figure 3.1 illustrates the classroom setting in BEL260 classes, which remained throughout the semester as well as the exact location where the camera was positioned.
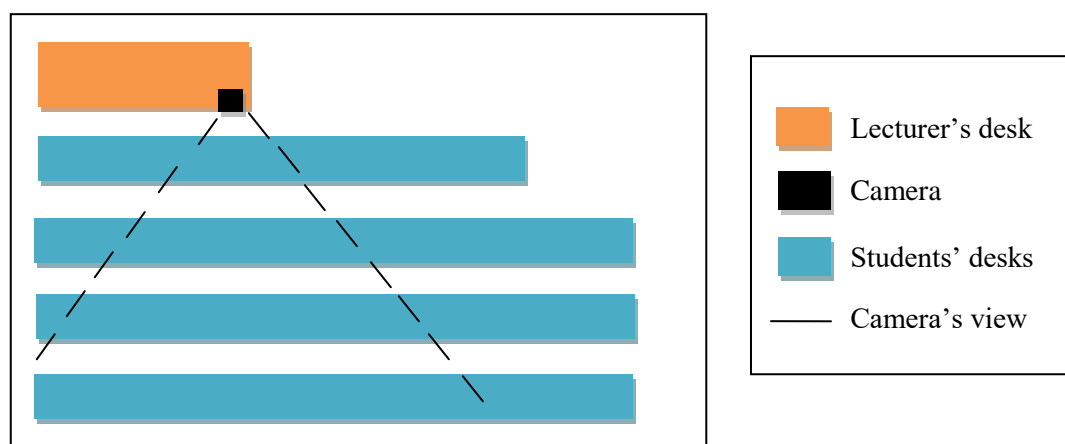
Figure 3.1. Position of camera in L2 classrooms

It was almost impossible to find a position where the camera's view could cover the entire classroom, but this problem was not solved because the camera was there only to familiarize students with its presence, not to make any recordings. The participants for this study were among the students in the classroom where familiarization of camera was performed.

Another concern arising is establishing credibility when interpreting the qualitative data. Creswell (2014b) noted that being a nonparticipant observer during main data collection, the observations made may not be as concrete as desired. Therefore, stimulated recall interview is included in the research design for the purpose of member checking by the participants. This interview aims to gain clarification to the researcher's interpretation and justification to their speech and behaviours. The execution of stimulated recall interview is explained in section 3.6.3.

3.4 Selection of Participants in the Main Study

A Malaysian public university is selected for this study, as it enrolls only Bumiputera students where majority of the students speaks Malay as their L1, and they also learn English as L2. The participants were selected in a deliberate manner, known as purposive sampling (Yin, 2011). This type of sampling is selected to reach the aim of this study, which focuses on low-proficient students and at tertiary level. In addition, this type of sampling is used because this study needs to identify the right respondents for in-depth investigation (Neuman, 2003), and they can purposefully provide the right information to the research questions (Creswell, 2007). Hence, the criteria set for the participants are low-proficient Malay students who learn English as their L2.

50

In the university where these participants were selected, it is compulsory for all Diploma students to take two English courses, which are Consolidating Language Skills (BEL120) in their first semester, and Intermediate English (BEL260) in their second semester. As the research revolves around low-proficient students, the participants of this study are among students who did not perform well in their BEL120 final examination and were currently taking BEL260 when this study took place. Their level of proficiency is determined by the result of BEL120, where they are graded by merit, with A+ being the most proficient and C being the least proficient (Tam et al., 2010). In this study, those who obtained grade C are perceived as low-proficiency students as the minimum requirement to be registered in BEL260 course is grade 'C' in BEL120. This method of determining low-proficient participants is employed from a study carried out by Vincent and Tan (2005).

All participants were from the same class and separated into two groups based on their English grades. To conduct the purposive sampling strategy, the researcher obtained BEL120 results from all students in a BEL260 classroom and sort the list by grades. Six female students from the bottom of the list were then officially selected as participants for this study. Only female students were selected as they take two-thirds of the population in the class. Even though there were male students in the class, the number of students who could be classified as low-proficient was insufficient to form an ideal two groups consisting of three students. Another reason is to avoid any possibility of gender factor (Cruickshank, Jenkins, & Metcalf, 2009) which might affect the result of this study. This is because there are gender differences that might be influential to the dynamic of group discussion, which include their approach in

51

solving problems (Conner, 2000) as well as one gender's domination over the other (Lucey, Brown, Denvir, Askew, & Rhodes, 2003).

For instance, Conner (2002) claimed that women tend to work together as a group, and encourage intellectual discussion in solving problems. On the other hand, men tend to be more dominant by displaying their abilities and power to become the leader of the group. They also give commands when involved in problem-solving tasks. To avoid gender dominance over the other gender (Lucey et al., 2003) due to different preference of approaches, participants of the same gender were selected for this study.

The participants were asked to respond to the Language Experience and Proficiency Questionnaire (refer to appendix B) to look into their background, exposure and interest towards English language. Although these data do not contribute to the findings of this study, it provides supporting information regarding their L2 performance and proficiency level. It is done by looking into their responses in terms of their hometown and whether English is used at home. The summary of the participants' background and exposure to English is displayed in table 3.1 below.

Table 3.1

Background of the participants

	Participant	Hometown	BEL120 result	English at home
Group A	S1	Perak	B-	Yes
	S2	Selangor	B	Yes
	S3	Kedah	C+	Yes

	Participant	Hometown	BEL120 result	English at home
Group B	S4	Kedah	C	No
	S5	Kedah	C	*
	S6	Kedah	C	No

*The item was left unanswered by S5.

3.4.1 Participants in Group A

Group A consists of three female students, which are S1, S2 and S3. All students in this group were 18 years old when this research was conducted, and claimed to have been speaking English occasionally with their family members. This indicates they have an advantage of practicing L2 authentically besides the formal education in class. However, their performance in English subject in the previous semester, which is Consolidating Language Skills (BEL120), slightly differs from one another. S1 from Perak has obtained grade B- for her English subject, S2 from Selangor managed to obtain grade B, while S3 who is from Kedah has obtained C+ for the same subject, making group A as the mixed ability group. In the discussion of findings, this information will be taken into account.

3.4.2 Participants in Group B

In group B, three female students who were all 18 years old have been selected for this research, referred to as S4, S5 and S6. They were purposely selected as they have very much in common. All three of them are from Kedah, and they obtained grade C for the English subject in the previous semester, hence making group B the same ability and less proficient group. However, S4 and S6 claimed that they do not speak English at home, while there was no response by S5 regarding her use of English

53

language at home. Although S5 did not respond to the question, it does not affect this study as it is merely additional information to her proficiency level, not to assist in answering the research questions. Similar to the information obtained for students in group A, the information about the students in group B will also be taken into account when the findings of the study is discussed.

All six students described the level of difficulty in learning English as moderate, even though they admitted having early exposure to English language since kindergarten. They have also made several efforts but in different ways in improving their English language skills outside the classroom, such as using English when reading books and/or newspapers, listening to songs, tuning to English radio station, watching dramas and/or movies, playing games, having conversation with others, and when using Automated Teller Machine (ATM). All six students have various reasons for learning English, but they definitely agreed on one main reason, which is the requirement that they need to fulfill when applying for a job in the future or to achieve their personal career goals (Thang, Ting, & Nurjanah, 2011).

3.5 Research Instruments

The main research instrument used in this study is observation fieldnotes, which the researcher records the participants' transcribed utterances during group discussion, as well as interview protocol. The observation fieldnotes were also used in the process of main data analysis with minor modification to suit the action of coding and emerging themes. In addition, considering this study as qualitative, another important fact is that the researcher of this study also has an influential factor to the credibility of this

study. The credibility of a qualitative research depends on the researcher as the instrument (Patton, 2002). In the following sections, these instruments will be explained to justify the data handling and interpretation for this study.

3.5.1 Observation Fieldnotes and Interview Protocol

Creswell (2014a) mentioned the use of descriptive and reflective fieldnotes as an instrument in analyzing observed data. Descriptive fieldnotes record the researcher's description of certain events, people, and behavior that is being observed. Meanwhile, reflective fieldnotes record personal thoughts that researchers have that relate to their insights, hunches, or broad ideas or themes that emerge during the observation. One strategy for writing fieldnotes as discussed by Wolfinger (2002) is the comprehensive note-taking. This strategy systematically and comprehensively describes everything that happens in a period of time, and records only the concerns of the observer.

The observation fieldnotes in this study as shown in table 3.2 consists of the details of group sessions, a column to record the time when certain moments were of interest to the researcher, descriptive fieldnotes for the researcher to describe utterances and interactions that captured the researcher's interest, as well as reflective fieldnotes for the researcher to write comments or questions to clarify with the participants. These comments or questions were the basis of the semi-structured questions used as interview protocol prepared for the stimulated recall interview sessions. The function of this observation form is to design semi-structured questions to the participants during the stimulated recall interview sessions.

Table 3.2

Sample of Descriptive Fieldnotes and Interview Protocol

Session Date: 5<u>th</u> March 2013		

Group: A (mixed ability) ☐   **Venue: Discussion Room**

Group: B (same, low proficiency) ☐

MINUTE	DESCRIPTIVE FIELDNOTES	INTERVIEW PROTOCOL
12:54	S1 defined 'interpersonal skills' in English, saying that it was communication between two people. S3 quickly respond in agreement.	S1 gave her own understanding of interpersonal skills. How do S2 and S3 define the same term?
18:05	S1 said "Students must have good communication to interact." S3 and S2 seemed doubtful, both were repeating 'to interact' in questioning tone. Trying to convince the others, S1 used three different forms: 'To interact, interaction, interact'. The fourth time, using Malay word 'interaksi.'	Why 3x English, then Malay? Malay as the last resort?
32:10	S1 felt something missing (S2 agreed) in the writing instruction below: "Because they lack good in communication skill." S1 thought the missing word is 'of', as in 'They lack of'. S2 decided to stick to the instruction.	S1 and S2 notice something not right (recalling information?). Why not make that change/trust instinct?
38:22	S4 asked her group members for the meaning of 'repairing'. S6 said "Repairing means present tense, you know present tense?"	What did S6 mean by "Repairing means present tense"?
47:07	S4 asked for the meaning of *Pasaran*. S5 responded "*Pasar, market. Market*" with slightly low tone. S4 still looked up for the word in dictionary, so S5 with a giggle raised her voice and demanded that she was right.	S5's low tone: uncertainty? Doubt? S5 gives the meaning of *pasaran*, yet S4 still checks in a dictionary. Why?
	All participants spoke in Malay most of the times, only code-switch once in a while at random moments.	General question: why all of them spoke in Malay when having group discussion?

3.5.2 Researcher as an Instrument

Even though the researcher was also the English lecturer for these students for BEL260 subject, the status of the researcher towards the participants can be beneficial in some ways. The first advantage is the ability to select the best participants suitable for this study. They were selected based on the researcher's observation since the beginning of the semester that they were comfortable interacting with one another in most L2 lectures, as well as choosing the same group members for most L2 activities conducted in groups. This may help to eliminate having any 'silent and passive' student in the group as well as encouraging effective group interaction (Burden & Byrd, 2003; Daniels & Bizar, 1998). When group activity was in session, the researcher was not in existence so that the natural environment of the discussion can be established as well as to avoid anxiety and fear of making errors if they were being observed in the presence of a lecturer.

The second advantage is by building rapport during the stimulated recall interview sessions. In an interview session, the interviewer needs to build rapport with the interviewees. Rapport is often attached to particular kinds of social partnerships characterized by asymmetries of role, for example, a teacher with students, or an employer with employees (Jorgenson, 1992). Dundon and Ryan (2010) who conducted a study on dealing with reluctant respondents mentioned that rapport building is suggested for successful interview sessions, which reward rich and insightful data from the interviewees. In this study, the researcher who was also the lecturer had an opportunity to build good rapport and trust with the participants. This allows them to speak freely and comfortably with someone whom they are familiar

with, along with the guarantee of anonymity and confidentiality of their feedback and responses related to this study.

However, the researcher as the L2 lecturer for the participants could lead to an issue of power relation and this position may jeopardize the findings of this study. Therefore, the researcher has put aside any preconceived ideas or background knowledge to allow flexibility in data collection and analysis. By doing this, the participants were not guided by the researcher's prior knowledge of the phenomenon, but by their own experience in order to minimize threat to the findings of this study (Polit, Beck, & Hungler, 2001). The researcher raised probing questions, and at the same time avoiding any potential leading questions that may cause the participants to respond as how they believed the researcher, or any English lecturer, wanted to hear.

3.6 Data Collection Procedure

As the data collection procedure is adapted from Stough's (2001) classroom observation, the method of data collection is presented in figure 3.2 below:
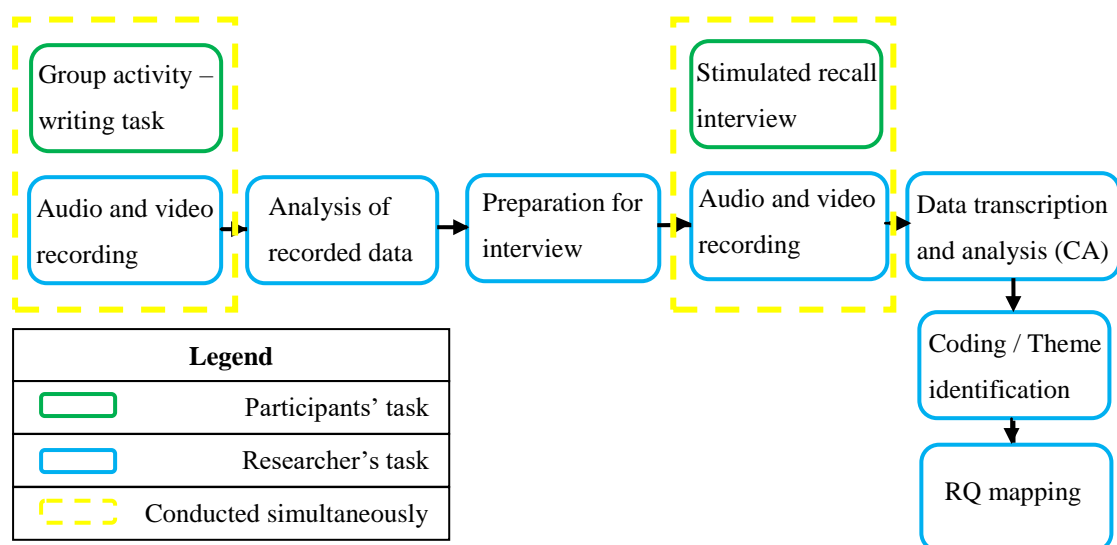
Figure 3.2. Research design framework

58

3.6.1 Assigning L2 Writing Task to the Participants

The task selected for this study is essay writing in groups, in which the essay question is extracted from BEL260 subject's past final examination paper. The instruction for the writing task is as displayed below:

> QUESTION 1
>
> University graduates are finding it difficult to get jobs because they lack good communication and interpersonal skills. Do you agree with this statement? State your opinion in **not less than 350 words**.

Basically, the students were instructed to complete the task within one hour without the presence of the lecturer. However, they would be given extra minutes to complete the task if necessary.

3.6.2 Setting Up Audio and Video Recording Devices

Observation sessions were conducted by referring to a series of steps suggested by Creswell (2007), which has been summarized as follows:

- Select participants to be observed. Obtain the required permissions needed to gain cooperation and agreement from the participants.
- Identify who or what to observe, when, and for how long.
- Record aspects such as students' speech and behaviours.
- During the observation, introduce yourself, be passive and friendly, and start with limited objectives in the first few sessions of observation.
- After observing, thank the participants and inform them of the use of the data and their accessibility to the study.

Other than audio recording, video recording is also done during the data collection. The use of video is inspired by Bowman (1994) in his study which aims to observe

both talk and actions of primary school students. Similarly, this study also needs to obtain similar data, which are participants' conversations and behaviours. It helps the researcher to identify any non-verbal behaviour that may assist students' process of completing the task that may not be recorded in the audio tape recording, such as facial expressions, book reference and use of dictionary. Additionally, Smith (1981) stated that using recording devices usually gives greater flexibility compared to non-recorded observations. Smith's (1981) point of view supports the purpose of conducting video recorded observation in this study, which is to assist both the researcher and the students to recall certain events during the group discussion as well as stimulated recall interviews.

In the beginning of the group discussion, an L2 task was given to both groups, and the participants were instructed to complete the task without specifying on which language they should use within the process. The camera was set up facing to but away from the participants to avoid it from being a distraction. However, audio recording device was placed in the middle of the group to get a clear record of their interactions. Figure 3.3 displays the position of recording devices for both groups.
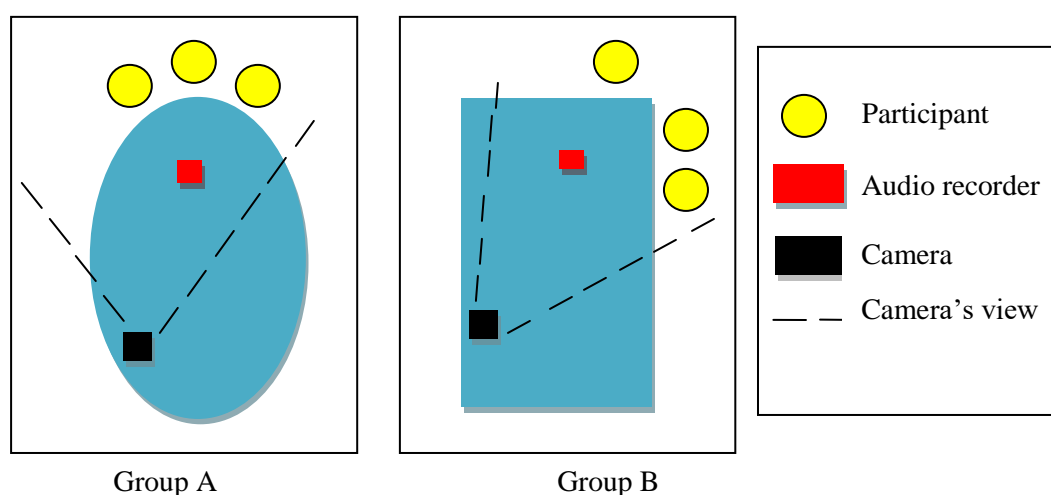
Figure 3.3. Seating arrangement and position of recording devices

Time on task was 60 minutes, but extra time would be given if necessary. The main purpose of this activity is to keep students on an L2 task to analyze their interactions in groups, while the end products are not part of the data analysis for this study (Scott & de la Fuente, 2008).

3.6.3 The Use of Stimulated Recall Interviews

After each completion of group activity, a stimulated recall interview session was conducted as soon as the data from the audio and video recordings were reviewed. The gap between the dates of group discussions and the stimulated recall interviews was six days. The interview questions were prepared in semi-structured way to allow possibilities to change sequence of questions and the forms, and most importantly to ensure the interview questions are within the themes that need to be covered (Kvale, 2007).

After the recorded observations of group discussions were obtained, both groups of participants were scheduled for stimulated recall interview in the following week.

61

Each group of participants was shown the recorded video of their interaction during group activity, and brought them into stimulated recall sessions. Stimulated recall is a research method that invites participants to recall their concurrent thinking during certain events using any form of visuals or audio recordings (Fox-Turnbull, 2009). The visuals, video or audio recordings are obtained by the researcher during the observation, and used later during the interview sessions (Stough, 2001). In this study, the participants were encouraged to pause the video anytime to give comment on any of their actions and interactions. If a period of two minutes passed without comment by the participants, the researcher would pause the video and ask open-ended questions whenever appropriate (Stough, 2001).

3.7 Data Analysis

As mentioned in section 3.2, conversational analysis is used to analyze the transcribed data obtained from the audio and video recorded interaction of the participants in group activity. On the other hand, the data obtained from stimulated recall interviews were meant only to justify some conversations or events that are perceived as significant to the researcher. Since this is a qualitative study, step-by-step practical processes are needed to carry out the qualitative data analysis. The stages in this data analysis are adapted from Lacey and Luff (2001) with reference from Braun and Clarke (2006) which follows a theoretical thematic analysis approach.

3.7.1 Transcription

The data collected from audio recordings were transcribed into text using simplified transcription symbols. Some of the transcription symbols used in this study are adapted from Silverman (2006) as shown in table 3.3 below.

Table 3.3

Transcription symbols

Transcription Symbol	Meaning	Example
Italic	Malay words and/or speech.	Other countries. *Banyak country kan*?
…	Unfinished speech	We need to draft the…
..	Pause within speech	They lack of.. they lack of, *saya rasa*.
[	The point which a current speaker's talk is overlapped by another's talk.	S1: They [say… S2: [No, I mean.. if we apply for a job we need.. requirement!
_____	Some form of stress, via pitch and/or amplitude.	S5: *Penyelia*. Supervisior ((pronounced /su:pəviʒə/)). S6:<u>Supervisor!</u> ((pronounced /su:pəvaizə/))
		S5: *Ni apa?* S6: Talking with co-workers, *maksudnya kawan-kawan sekerja la.*
_____	More than one part of conversations which take place at different times.	S5: Okay maintain a relationships with the workers. S6: Ha, relationship with co-workers *kan*?
		S5: *Pasaran, pasaran sekarang*

63

		dia nak memerlukan seseorang yang dia boleh.. ability *dia dari segi* relationships with co-workers.
(( ))	Transcriber's descriptions rather than transcriptions.	Aah, visor ((pronounced /vaizə/)).

The text of transcribed data was then analyzed using conversational analysis to search for any form of L1 mediation in the participants' interaction during group activities. It is supported by the data obtained from video recording which was used for reference in what manner the words were spoken, such as silences and gestures.

3.7.2 Organization

Next, the data were organized into easily retrievable sections. Each observation and interview session were identified by date and/or context. This is to ensure easy retrieval and reference for both the participants and the researcher. In addition, all data is organized manually without using any software to allow easy access as well as to provide an opportunity for data critique and interpretation (Hesse-Biber, 2010).

For the organization of data obtained from this study, the video and audio recordings as well as the transcription of group discussion from Group A were labeled as 'GD Group A 5 March 2013', while similar data obtained from Group B were labeled as 'GD Group B 6 March 2013'. After the stimulated recall interview sessions were conducted, the video and audio recordings of the sessions were labeled as 'SRI Group A 12 March 2013' for Group A and 'SRI Group B 13 March 2013' for Group B. The data were labeled as such to keep track of the types of data and the time they were

collected. It makes data retrieval easier when conducting the stimulated recall interview which will be explained further in the next section.

3.7.3 Familiarization

Once the transcriptions and organization of the discussion sessions have been done, the process of familiarization began. The collected data were reviewed, where the recorded videos were watched, audio recordings of the group discussion sessions were listened, and transcriptions were made before the first analysis began (Lacey & Luff, 2001). By organizing the data retrieved from the group discussions, it has become easy for the researcher to begin reviewing and analyzing the recorded observation and the audiotapes of both groups. The observation log which consists of descriptive and reflective fieldnotes was used for the preparation and setting up semi-structured questions before the stimulated recall interview.

During the familiarization stage, the researcher observed the behavior of the participants and listened to their conversation, taking note of any signs of L1 mediation along the way. Whenever any sign of L1 mediation or any significant interaction were identified, the video of the observation was paused, the time when the event had taken place was noted, and a brief remark was written down, all were done manually. This process helps for data retrieval, not only because the analysis of the data consumes a long period of time, but it also promotes smooth and accurate execution of the later stimulated recall interviews with the participants.

3.7.4 Coding

The following stage is coding, which is the process of conceptually dividing raw qualitative data (Lacey & Luff, 2001). Once the codes were identified, they were placed into themes or categories, which will be elaborated in the next section. The process of recoding and new revised categories was done whenever necessary.

The coding stage was done initially by reading through the transcribed data of the group discussion. Particular words or phrases that seemed to be repetitious and have certain functions were looked for, such as *apa maksud* (what is the meaning of), *macam mana* (how to), and *aku rasa* (I think). These words and phrases were then reviewed and interpreted in terms of when and why they were mentioned in order to clarify the functions of these words and phrases, and to see if these utterances somehow provide a form of learning to the participants. Once the coding stage is done, the data analysis for this study came to the final stage which is the emergence of themes.

3.7.5 Categories or Themes

At this stage, emergent strategies or themes were identified. However, Lacey and Luff (2001) suggested that recoding procedure might still be necessary in order to develop more well-defined categories. In this study, the categories were named according to the function of the codes identified from the earlier stage of data analysis, specifically the participants' behaviours observed within the transcribed interaction. The categories will be displayed in section 4.2 in Chapter Four.

The initial process of developing categories for this study is by reviewing the functions of the utterances obtained during the coding stage. Once the functions have been confirmed, an appropriate term to describe the function had been searched among related works, journals and articles to be used for each category. The terms used to name the categories are elaborated further from section 4.2 onwards.

3.8 The Execution of Pilot Studies

As an important part in the success of a study, pilot studies are conducted to approximate the feasibility and suitability of the actual study (Chua, 2012). In social science research, the term pilot study can be perceived as a small scale version or a trial run for the main study (Polit et al., 2001). Being a novice qualitative researcher, pilot studies need to be executed as a trial run in order to assess whether the research design is realistic and workable. The execution of pilot studies also allows the researcher to gain adequate skills to operate recording devices at all times. Besides, it provides insight for the researcher to identify potential problems that might occur, and make necessary adjustments before the execution of main data collection (Van Teijlingen & Hundley, 2010).

3.8.1 Background of Pilot Study 1

The first pilot study was conducted on four Part 3 Diploma students who have low-proficiency in English. Low-proficiency is determined by their results in previous semester's English course. The purposes of this pilot study were to pilot the initial planned methods of data collection, to understand the dynamics of interaction

throughout the discussion while the students were completing an L2 task, as well as to identify codes in data analysis.

The pilot study was done during lecture, where all students in the class were separated into four per group. All groups were assigned the same task, which is "to rearrange main ideas and supporting details in the correct order". Each group was given five to eight pieces of cut-out sentences which build up a complete paragraph. However, only one group with the least proficiency in English was selected and their discussion was voice recorded throughout the process of completing the task.

3.8.2 Findings for Pilot Study 1

From the first pilot study, it was found that the respondents spoke in L1 to express ideas, usually within their discussion group. Since it was a task to be completed in L2, they tend to code switch most of the time. However, when they need to ask questions or clarify certain things with the lecturer, they took an initiative to speak in L2. Additionally, this group of students practices self and peer corrections, but there were certain times where peer correction did not take place or completely ignored.

Several problems have been identified when conducting the pilot study. First, stimulated recall interview was not held due to time constrain and there was no video recorded data. Second, there is a difficulty in analyzing the voice recording due to loud noises in the background as this recording was done during lecture time. Due to these limitations, new plans had been made for the second pilot study. Selected group of students would be separated from the others so that the researcher could observe the discussion to collect raw data, prepare interview questions at the same time as

well as to eliminate background noises. Video recording would be done for the purpose of stimulated recall interview, and the interview would be done as soon as the respondents have completed the task for easy recall purposes. These improvements were planned to be carried out during the execution of the second pilot study.

3.8.3 Background of Pilot Study 2

The second pilot study was also conducted on four Part 3 Diploma students who have low-proficiency in English. The purposes of this pilot study are to determine the validity of the research method, to determine the suitable difficulty level of the text to the target students, as well as to identify whether codes obtained from the first pilot study can be used in the second pilot study.

As mentioned earlier, the second pilot study was done by separating the target students from the other groups of students. They were required to perform a written task, which is to construct an outline of a given topic following the guideline set by the course information. The given topic was 'Graduate Unemployment in Malaysia', in which they must provide three to four key points or reasons to support the thesis statement of the paper.

The discussion was audio taped and in the presence of the researcher. The researcher was in the same room with the participants and observed the entire session so that raw data could be collected and questions for stimulated recall interview could be instantly prepared. Although there is a possibility that this presence may influence participants' behavior in some way (Carless, 2008; Iacono, Brown, & Holtham, 2009), this was done simply to explore the best way to perform the observation and stimulated recall

interview. Nevertheless, the researcher would consider other alternatives to reduce the risk of being present during the group discussion.

Unfortunately, video recording which was planned could not be done due to technical problem. This is, in fact, another reason for the researcher to be present during the group discussion, which is to ensure all devices are working. As soon as the discussion ends and the students have completed the task, the semi-structured interview was conducted immediately.

3.8.4 Findings for Pilot Study 2

From the second pilot study, it was found that the students seemed to put an effort in using L2 throughout the discussion. In fact, they admitted being afraid to use L1 within the presence of a lecturer. This is because their English lecturer in previous semester was very strict and forbid any use of L1 among students in class. In addition, simplifying L2 sentences and using words in L1 when not knowing the words in L2 were also identified in the second pilot study. Apart from that, several findings that are similar to the ones obtained from the first pilot study are self and peer corrections took place, but sometimes the corrections were ignored.

Despite the second pilot study, several problems still emerged. First, the session was not video recorded due to technical problem. Second, the stimulated recall interview was not conducted effectively as the video and voice recordings were not shown to the students. After the discussion, only semi-structured interview was conducted to the students. In addition, the interview which was conducted immediately after the completion of task may not provide sufficient findings because the interview

questions were only based on the researcher's observation during the group discussion. This may result in lack of preparation for the interview, where the questions were not thoroughly constructed based on any recorded data, and the issue may not be investigated further. Besides, the characteristics of the students in both pilot studies are slightly different from the target respondents for main data collection.

Due to these limitations, the third pilot study needed to be conducted. In order to imitate the main data collection, six low-proficient students in Part 2 Diploma would be selected. Answering reading comprehension questions from previous semesters' tests would be used as task completion, as it is one of the course's assessments. Video and voice recording would be done to allow methodical planning for stimulated recall interview, which will be done on the next day. This is to allow sufficient time for the researcher to review the videos and prepare questions for stimulated recall interview. In addition, the discussion among participants would be conducted without the presence of the researcher to avoid from influencing the behavior of the participants.

3.8.5 Background of Pilot Study 3

The third pilot study was conducted on six Part 2 Diploma students who have low-proficiency in English, which is determined by their results in previous semester's English course. The purposes of this pilot study were to test the applicability and suitability of the text and the type of task completion, which is answering reading comprehension questions. This pilot study also aims to test the functionality of the recording devices, as well as to pilot the stimulated recall interview based on the recorded data.

The participants were separated into two groups, and they were required to answer a set of reading comprehension questions in 30 minutes. They were left alone throughout the discussion, except for a few times when the researcher came in to check if they had completed the task, and to ensure all devices were still functioning. The video and voice recordings were analyzed and questions for stimulated recall interviews were set up and conducted on the next day.

3.8.6 Findings for Pilot Study 3

The findings reveal that the students did not have any difficulty understanding the instruction, as well as the questions in the given task because they have done similar exercises in class. However, it is noticeable that L1 mediation was not fully explored because it was mostly used for comprehension and conversation purposes. Based on the findings from all the pilot studies and especially pilot study 3, it is decided that essay writing similar to the task given in pilot study 2 would be more suitable in order to explore thoroughly the mediation of L1 which covers grammar, sentence structure, choice of words, and many more. Other than that, it has been decided that the research design employed in pilot study 3 would also be used for the main data collection.

3.8.7 Conclusion from Pilot Studies

In the process of conducting the three pilot studies, they have not only helped to evaluate the feasibility and suitability of the main data collection, they have also become the *raison dêtre* to this study in that they have pointed out some weaknesses of the initial method that need to be controlled or require necessary improvement. In addition, they have also given the researcher a gist of categories emerged from the

72

observation of the pilot studies, which allows the construction of semi-structured questions for the interviews. The categories emerged from the pilot studies are introduced in the following section.

3.9 Emerging Strategies from Pilot Studies

Throughout the pilot studies, it is noticeable that there were certain strategies employed when they were completing the tasks given in L2 group activities. For example, the participants from the pilot studies recalled what they had learnt before or their past experiences as a reference to relate with what they encounter during the task. They were also constantly correcting each other, although in some cases they actually misled their friends by giving a false or wrong correction.

Once in a while, they would ask the lecturer for help when everyone in the group reached dead end. For this purpose, the participants switched to L2 when asking questions to the lecturer, but returned to L1 when talking to the group members. These findings were then elaborated in section 4.2 in the following chapter to see whether they are also visible in the main data.

3.10 Conclusion

The literature review reveals the necessity of looking into the mediation of L1 in L2 learning among low-proficient students from the angle of qualitative approach. It corresponds to the purpose of the study where it is not the participants' preference that should be focused on, but in what ways does such mediation actually assist their cognitive process and learning techniques in order to survive the second language

73

lessons. Thus, qualitative approach is expected to be able to provide adequate exposure and in-depth discovery of the minds of these students.

CHAPTER FOUR
RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

Since this research looks into the factors that lead to L1 mediation among low-proficient students while working in group as well as how the L1 mediation assists them in understanding the instruction, generating ideas and presenting ideas into words, this chapter reveals what has been discovered from the obtained data. Here, the transcribed data is analyzed to search for any indicators of the respondents' efforts to make sense of English language in order to complete the essay writing task as best as they could. The strategies to complete the writing task emerged from the pilot studies, and they seem to be apparent in the main data as well. Some of the strategies include identifying errors (grammar, choice of words, pronunciation, writing format, etc), making corrections, and getting help from others.

4.2 Emerging Strategies or Themes

For discussion purposes, table 4.1 displays a list of categories emerged from the findings of the main data collection, some of which have also appeared in the findings of the pilot studies in section 3.9 and elaborated in section 4.3. Along with the list of strategies is the description for each strategy used by the participants which is supported by an extract of transcribed data obtained from the analysis of the interaction from the main data.

Table 4.1

Strategies emerged from the main data

STRATEGIES	DESCRIPTION	SAMPLE OF DATA
Memory Recall	Students relate their task in writing with any form of knowledge, such as what they have heard, used, and/or learnt before, in and outside English language classrooms.	"*Sebab, siapa cakap..* lecturer *mana cakap.. sebab dia punya* communication *itu tak ada, susah dia macam, macam untuk perkhidmatanlah.*" "Because, who said it.. which lecturer said that.. because the communication isn't there, it's difficult like, like for services."
Peer Correction	Students make a certain type of error in L2, another group member notices the error and makes correction.	S5: *Penyelia.* Supervisor, ((pronounced /suːpəviʒə/)) *penyelia.* S6: Supervisor! ((pronounced /suːpəvaizə/)) S5: Aah, visor ((pronounced /vaizə/)).
Peer Assistance in L1	Students seek help from other group members to clarify certain information in L2 by using L1, mostly to understand meaning of words and concepts.	S4: *Ni apa?* ((pointing to a word found in a reference book)) S4: What's this? ((pointing to a word found in a reference book)) S5: Co-workers. Talking to co-workers, *maknanya kawan-kawan sekerja la. Aku rasa kawan-kawan sekerja.* S5: Co-workers. Talking to co-workers, it means colleagues. I think 'colleagues'.
Peer Assistance in L2	Students seek help from other group members to clarify certain information in L2, mostly to construct sentences and apply grammatical rules.	S3: Can also *ke*, also can? S3: Is it 'can also' or 'also can'? S1: They also can, make. S2: ((murmuring to herself)) They also can make, they can also make. S1: Most of organization today…
Use of L1	Students decide to use L1 instead of L2, mostly to convey ideas.	S2: *Diorang pentingkan..camna nak cakap ek? Diorang punya* main requirement.. *camna nak cakap?* S2: They prefer..how do I say this? Their main requirement.. how should I say it?

4.3 The Factors that Lead to L1 Mediation in Group Activity

As shown in several previous studies mentioned in Chapter Two such as Kavaliauskiene (2009), Carless (2008) and Dujmovic (2007), whether it helps L2 learners to cope with L2 lessons or not, they would almost always turn to their L1 when facing difficulties in language learning. Despite strict prohibition and control by L2 teachers (Al-Nofaie, 2010; Carless, 2008; Roussol, 2010), somehow this does not stop them from relying on L1 to assist them in some ways throughout the learning process of L2. This brings to a question of what makes the learners feel the need to use L1 to mediate learning although prohibited by their teachers.

The observation of the group discussion showed that limitation of vocabulary knowledge is one of the factors that lead to L1 mediation among the participants. From the data, it was found that limited vocabulary becomes a barrier in all stages of writing experienced by the participants, starting from understanding instruction of the task, discussion for ideas, and construction of the essay. In several occasions, the meaning of words in L2 became the point of discussion because they may not be able to proceed with essay writing unless they understand the meaning of certain terms. This finding supports respondents' claims in previous studies (Dujmovic, 2007; Kavaliauskiene, 2009; Nazary, 2008; Schweer, 1999) that they rely on L1 to understand new words and difficult concepts. Since mentioned studies did not investigate how L1 assists the learners in L2 learning, this study will provide the description of such practice in the later sections.

The second factor for L1 mediation is the difficulty in speech production if L2 is used as the medium of instruction. It can be observed that there had been constant pauses

77

and difficulties in finishing sentences throughout the discussion whenever L2 needed to be used. This happened most likely due to the participants searching for the right words before they were able to convey it verbally. In other words, they were possibly employing grammar-translation method in their mind. This finding explains why most L2 learners admitted of frequently asking how to say certain words in English (Kavaliauskiene, 2009; Nazary, 2008). Moreover, having difficulty in speech production may be the factor for them to have in-class discussion using L1 (Nazary, 2008). In fact, even some L2 teachers also agreed with how L1 saves time in explaining difficult terms to their students, as mentioned by Roussol (2010) and Auerbach (1993) in their research findings. This factor will also be elaborated from section 4.4 until 4.6.

It was also found that L1 mediation took place because it guaranteed mutual understanding on what was being spoken among the participants. During stimulated recall interview, when all six participants were asked why they used L1 when having group discussion, they unanimously agreed on one same reason:

"Takut diorang tak faham saya cakap."
"I was afraid they might not understand what I wanted to say"

As many L2 teachers are concerned with the students not being able to understand teaching and instructions in L2, the participants in this study also feared that others might have a hard time comprehending their speech as well if they used L2. This is supported by Morahan (2010) who claimed that students used L1 when having conversation in order to build shared meaning while evaluating written tasks in a

78

group discussion. It is closely related to the first factor, in which limited vocabulary is the cause for L1 mediation in order to gain mutual understanding not only among L2 learners, but with the teachers as well. According to Gan (2012), L2 learners blamed their inadequate vocabulary as the reason for their fear of being misunderstood by others. This may probably explain the reason students chose to speak in their L1, but remain silent when asked to speak in L2 as reported by Carless (2008).

As the three factors for L1 mediation are identified, it is essential to describe clearly how these factors play their significant roles in the process of completing a writing task in L2 among the observed participants. The description is organized according to the research questions as stated in Chapter One, which are the way L1 mediation assists in understanding the task instruction, generating ideas in group discussion, and converting ideas in L1 into writing in L2.

4.4 How L1 Mediation Assists in Understanding the Instruction

The transcribed conversation was analyzed by looking out for any keywords mentioned by the participants that were related to any word or phrase from the writing instruction. Both groups were given the same instruction for the L2 writing task, which is stated below.

> **QUESTION 1**
> University graduates are finding it difficult to get jobs because they lack good communication and interpersonal skills. Do you agree with this statement? State your opinion in **not less than 350 words**.

4.4.1 Defining 'Interpersonal Skills' from the Written Instruction

The groups displayed a very similar way in understanding the topic given for the task. The first action done by both groups was reading the written instruction and trying to make meaning to the important keywords. It can be observed that S1 in group A and S5 in group B initiated the discussion by clarifying the meaning of interpersonal skills as it is the key words in the instruction. One way of doing it was by using memory recall and S4 from group B must have heard of the term 'interpersonal skill' before from another lecturer which is observed in line 55 from the excerpt below:

1 S4: *Sebab, siapa cakap..* lecturer *mana cakap sebab dia punya* communication *itu tak ada, susah dia macam, macam untuk perkhidmatanlah.*
1 S4: Because, someone said.. a lecturer said that because there is no communication, so it's difficult, like, for services.

2 S5: *Tak, susahlah kan nak, nak apa-apa pun dia kena* interpersonal ((skills)), *dia bukan* intra.
2 S5: No, I mean, it's difficult, right? Anything requires interpersonal ((skills)), it's not intra.

When observing how group A defined the same term, there was no sign of any reference to previous knowledge, hence it was initially believed that the definition was made out of S1's own interpretation as shown in the excerpt below.

3 S1: Communication, communication is the interaction, *kan*?

4 S2: University graduate…((reading the instruction))

5 S1: *Dia kata* ((reading the instruction)) 'university graduates are finding it difficult to get job because they lack good communication and interpersonal skills. Do you agree with this statement? State your opinion not less than 350 words'. So *kita akan.. kita yang ini* point *yang pertama, kan?* Lack good communication *ni kita boleh cakaplah sebab apa dalam* English, *mungkin cara dia bercakap.* Interpersonal skills *ni* communication between two people, *kan?*
5 S1: It says ((reading the instruction)) 'university graduates are finding it difficult to get job because they lack good communication and interpersonal skills. Do you agree with this statement? State

your opinion not less than 350 words'. So we'll.. this is our first point, right? We can say in English why there's lack good communication, maybe it's the way one speaks. Interpersonal skills mean communication between two people, right?

6 S3: Inter, *a'ha* between two people.

Compared to 'communication', both groups seemed to be more concerned with the term 'interpersonal skills', presumably because they were not really familiar or rarely used the term. This was probably true to both groups because they used the word communication when trying to figure out the definition of interpersonal skills, which indicates that they had very clear understanding of what communication meant. However, it was noted that two participants in group B were sharing their thoughts on the meaning of interpersonal skills, while in group A, S1 was the only one to define the term and seek for agreement from the others.

Out of curiosity, S2 and S3 were asked during the stimulated recall interview if they really agreed on the definition given by S1, or they had other ideas of what interpersonal skills meant but were not mentioned during the group discussion. They clarified that they truly agreed with the definition of interpersonal skills stated by S1 because it matched with how the term was defined in one of their program courses. Since all participants were classmates, it was confirmed that when defining meaning of 'interpersonal skills', both groups had learnt about the term earlier which allowed them to employ the strategy of memory recall to understand the keyword of the essay, despite not having the exact definition of interpersonal skills correctly.

Although both groups employed memory recall to define interpersonal skills, both groups were seen using different languages in doing so. In line 1, S4 was highlighting

the definition of 'lack interpersonal skills', and she used L1 to do so. On the contrary, S1 in line 5 used L2 to clarify the definition of 'interpersonal skills' and it was repeated by S3 to indicate her agreement on the definition. A possible reason for such difference is their level of proficiency in English language. S4 who obtained grade C for previous semester's English course may probably feel confident with her own definition of the term when she explained it in L1. However, S1 obtained grade B-, which means she has the ability to use simple L2 more comfortably than S4, thus she was able to define interpersonal skills using simple L2. Dujmovic (2007) also found similar result among 100 Croatian university students whom 90 percent of them believed that using L1 helps to define new vocabulary items, such as abstract words. In addition, 81 percent of them applied the same method to understand difficult concepts better. Similarly, in Kavaliauskiene's (2009) study, more than 80% of the respondents claimed that they used bilingual dictionary to translate unfamiliar words while reading professional texts. Translating what they had read may be a natural thing to do among L2 learners because S4 also tried to define 'interpersonal skills' by translating it into L1.

Somehow, this difference has its price. It was observed that when S4 used L1 to define the term 'lack interpersonal skills', it opened a room for discussion for other low-proficient students to respond and share thoughts by also using L1 as displayed in line 2. This was not observed in group A's conversation where S1 who used L2 to defined the term 'interpersonal' and seek for agreement from her group members, only received a brief response of agreement from S3 in line 6. This observation reflects a scenario of what Carless (2008) had found in his interview, where a Hong

Kong English teacher claimed that students refused to speak when forced to use L2. Both situations indicate less active or a display of rejection to engage in conversations whenever L2 is required.

In reference to group B, it can be questioned why they took the trouble of using L1 when they were going to write their definition in L2 in their task anyway. The possible reason is that they comprehended the task instruction better if it was translated in L1. Additionally, it would be easier for them to agree on the definition of interpersonal skills by interacting in L1 to ensure everyone clearly understood their suggestions on how their main ideas were related to the topic of the essay, thus keeping their discussion for ideas on track. This interpretation is based on studies that indicate learners' inability to express themselves easily using L2 (see Carless, 2008; Fauziah et al., 2009; Nazary, 2008; Roussol, 2010).

In the end, whether they used L1 or L2 to define interpersonal skills, both groups ended up having similar interpretation for the keywords of the writing task. From the participants' point of view, interpersonal skills were merely communication and these words were used interchangeably. In the third paragraph written by group A, interpersonal skills were defined as 'communication between two person'. Meanwhile, the first sentence in the introductory paragraph by group B stated that 'Interpersonal communication is more important in our daily life…' and the last sentence in the same paragraph was written as 'We agree with this statement because university graduates need to know and learn more about communication skills before applying a job'. However, from the business perspective, interpersonal skill is the set of abilities enabling a person to interact positively and work effectively with others

which include the areas of communication, listening, delegation of tasks and leadership. Both groups in their essays had demonstrated that they simply related interpersonal skills with communication and interaction with others, and not on the ability to work effectively with others.

4.4.2 Keeping Track of the Word Limit

The instruction mentioned that the essay must be written in not less than 350 words. During the observation, it was found that group A showed concern on the length of their essay throughout the group discussion. Occasionally, they would remind each other to write longer as they had to keep up with the word limit. On the other hand, group B did not show any sign of concern on the word limit, that is, until they had completed the essay. No one mentioned anything about having to write more that 350 words and the word counting was done only when the essay had been completed. The number of words written by group B was exactly 350 words. Although the word limit was part of the instruction for this L2 writing task and group B did not show any concern towards it compared to group A, this does not mean group B failed to understand the instruction. In the end, they still counted the number of words in their essay, and they smiled in satisfaction or amusement when found that the word limit was achieved. To them, the essay writing was their main priority, not the word limit.

On the other hand, group A displayed their concern on the number of words occasionally throughout the group discussion. It all started when S2 commented that their introductory paragraph seemed quite long. S1 warned them not to write too much and four to five sentences are sufficient enough for introductory paragraph. This

was how the conversation among the participants in group A was triggered regarding the number of words as shown below.

7 S2:   *Tapi dia nak 350* ((words)).
7 S2:   But it requires 350 ((words)).

8 S1:   Not less than.

9 S3:   *Banyak kot.*
9 S3:   That's a lot.

10 S2:   *Kena lebih* ((350 words)).
10 S2:   There should be more ((than 350 words)).

S1 reminded the rest of the group members not to write too long since they were given only one hour to complete the writing task, and S2 referred to the number of words required for the essay. In line 8, while S1 had already emphasized that the number of words should not be less than 350, S2 still rephrased it in L1, as shown in line 10. Considering that these participants were university students, it was unusual for them not knowing the meaning of 'not less than', therefore it is believed that line 10 was an utterance to S2 herself instead of telling the others.

The fact that S2 rephrased 'not less than' in L1 indicates that L1 helped her to confirm about the word limit better than stating it in L2. Following the above excerpt, after a while, the participants in group A were found trying to keep more ideas flowing so that they could reach more than 350 words. Occasionally, these lines were spoken:

11S1: *Tak cukup* 350 ((words)).
11 S1: Not enough 350 ((words)).

12 S2: *Bagi panjang* ((the essay)).
12 S2: Expand it ((the essay)).

85

13 S1: *Eh boleh, boleh masuk lagi* ((ideas)). Furthermore…
13 S1: Yes, we can include more ((ideas)). Furthermore…

14 S3: Furthermore

15 S1: *Eh boleh je buat banyak perenggan sebab ini 350* ((word limit)).
15 S1: We can have more paragraphs because the word limit is 350.

Most of the time, S1 was the one who showed concern on the word limit, although in line 8, the word limit instruction was uttered by S1 in L2, while S2 rephrased it in L1. This observation suggests that for intermediate learners, they are capable of storing L2 input with minimal dependence on L1, and also able to recall the information whenever necessary. Indeed, those who preferred the use of L1 in L2 classrooms were mostly among low-proficient learners and less preferred by intermediate and advanced learners (Kavaliauskiene, 2009; Dujmovic, 2007; Tang, 2002; Schweer, 1999), hence L1 mediation may not be useful to intermediate and advanced learners as much as how it may be useful to low-proficient ones.

4.5 How L1 Mediation Assists in Generating Ideas in Group Discussion

To respond to this research question, the data was analysed by searching for any conversation that aims to explain, elaborate and expand the three keywords communication, interpersonal skills and job. Most of the times during the group discussions, both group A and B used L1 as their main medium of communication. They only code-switched if the words were more common in L2, and whenever they needed to verbally construct sentences in L2 for the writing task. L1 functions as a medium to ensure one's speech is well understood by others.

4.5.1 Making Sure Ideas were Understood by Others

It can be observed that L1 functions as an alternative in case speaking in L2 prevented the other group members from getting the message that they tried to convey. In one example, S1 in group A had justified that she stopped persuading her group members that 'interaction' was the word they should use only when she translated it in L1. She believed that since they all had Malay language as their L1, her group members understood her better when the language was used. Their conversation had been transcribed as below:

16 S1: In universities, normally students must have good communication to interact.

17 S3: To interact?

18 S2: To interact *ke*?
18 S2: Is it 'to interact'?

19 S1: To interact with other people *la*. Interaction. Interact. *Interaksi*.
19 S1: To interact with other people. Interaction. Interact. Interaction.

In line 17 and 18, S2 and S3 seemed doubtful with the use of the word 'interaction'. They were asked why they felt that way, and S2 explained that it didn't seem right for her to have 'to interact' at the end of a sentence. S3 added by saying that it would be better to say 'to interact with someone'. Their opinion was presented in their essay in the introductory paragraph which stated 'In universities, normally student must have good communication to interact with other people'. S1, however, had misunderstood S2 and S3's doubt to her L2 sentence by assuming that they did not know the meaning of 'interact'. She assured them by repeatedly pronouncing the word with an intention of getting her friends to understand the correct use of the word. When asked why she

stopped at the word '*interaksi'*, S1 responded that she assumed her friends would finally understand her when an L1 word is used. This shows that in L2 learners' view, L1 functions as an alternative to give clear meaning of words to their peers, especially when their message is not received by the low-proficient ones. It is similar to a study conducted by Gan (2012) towards students at tertiary level in Hong Kong, which reveals that lack of vocabulary knowledge is the barrier to the production and delivery of spoken messages.

4.5.2 Easy Sharing of Ideas

Another way in which L1 use assisted both groups' discussion was to ease the flow of their communication. Even before the task began, participants in group B asked if they were allowed to use both L1 and L2 in their discussion, especially when they were aware that they were being recorded. All six participants agreed that allowing them to use their L1 when having conversation with their peers had made the task easier for them in a way that others understood them as well as they were being understood. Below is an example that shows easier delivery of message when L1 was in use:

20 S4: *Aku bagi pandangan je. Macam katakan kalau dia kerja dalam tu, dia bukan kerja untuk dia sorang.*
20 S4: I'm just giving my point of view. Let's say, if someone works there ((in an organization)), he's not working all by himself.

21 S5: *Dia bekerja dengan ramai!*
21 S5: He's working with many people!

22 S6: *Kerja dengan orang lain…*
22 S6: Working with others…

23 S4: *Pastu kalau tak* communicate, *kalau* just interpersonal *kan, dia cakap, dia sorang je paham. Tak guna jugak kan? Dia kena ada* interpersonal, and then *macam.. cadangan kalau dia salah menggunakan* interpersonal *tu kan, akan menyebabkan orang lain salah faham.*

23 S4: Then, if he doesn't communicate, if there's just interpersonal, when he speaks, he'll be the only one who understands. It's no use, right? He must have interpersonal, and then like.. I'm suggesting if he misuse interpersonal, it will lead to other people's misunderstanding.

24 S6: *Aa, boleh*.
24 S6: Aa, sure.

25 S4: So…

26 S4, S6: How we elaborate? ((laughed))

Conversation in the above example reveals that when they spoke in their L1, the flow of communication ran smoothly. From line 20 until line 23, ideas were continuously generated, shared, and discussed, and everyone understood each other. Yet when it came to converting their ideas into L2 to be written in their essay, the conversation experienced a temporary stop. It was obvious that in line 26, S4 and S6 had the same reaction of uncertainty and lack of capability when they needed to elaborate on what they had discussed earlier into L2. Undoubtedly they could convert their ideas into L2, but it definitely slowed them down. They required more time to find the right words and construct sentences. It is also assumed that due to time constraints on finding the right vocabulary and comprehensible sentences, grammatical aspects were no longer elements that needed to be paid attention. By allowing them to use L1 in group discussion, such situation is most likely to happen frequently. But the focus of this study is low-proficiency students, so it is expected that they were able to complete the task faster than having to use only L2 throughout the group discussion.

Another similar situation in which L1 assists them during the discussion to generate ideas in writing was also observed in group A. Nazary (2008) had highlighted this problem among L2 learners in which the participants tend to ask how to say certain words in English. It goes back to vocabulary issues as well that somehow makes

communication and expression of ideas difficult to execute. Take a conversation
extracted from group A's discussion as an example:

27 S2: *Dia nak diorang punya.. apa?*
27 S2: They want their… what's the word?

28 S3: Education.

29 S2: *Bukan, bukan.*
29 S2: No, no.

30 S1: *Orang [cakap…*
30 S1: They say…

31 S2: *[Bukan, macam.. alah kalau kita minta kerja kena..* requirement!
31 S2: No, I mean.. if we apply for a job we need.. requirement!

32 S1: Ha, requirement. ((Saya)) *Nak cakap tu la. Kita, kita beritahu la. Penting tu.*
32 S1: Yes, requirement. That's what I wanted to say. Let's include that. It's important.

In the above conversation, S2 was sharing her thought that there are many employers
who set strict requirements to the newly graduated job seekers. However, her delivery
of thought was delayed for seven seconds from the moment she spoke in line 27 until
she managed to recall the word 'requirement' in line 31. Supposedly seven seconds is
perceived by some people as a considerable amount of time for memory recall, but
not for S2. In this case, she seemed to be given up trying to recall the word because in
line 31, she intended to describe the word 'requirement' in L1. But before she could
finish her sentence, the word that she was looking for in L2 finally came to her.
Considering that S2 obtained grade B in previous English course, yet she experienced
difficulty in recalling a word, the situation could be tougher for participants in group
B as they all obtained grade C in similar course. These observations are related to
studies by Fauziah et al. (2009) and Carless (2008) where L2 learners were unable or

refused to respond to teachers' questions until they were allowed to answer in L1. Hence, allowing L1 once in a while may help the low-proficient ones to keep up with L2 learning and be more active in classrooms.

It is interesting to note that the act of searching for a word in L2 during discussion for the content of the writing task took place only in group A. Participants in group B also seemed to be doing the same but only for the purpose of transferring what they have discussed into written form. Nazary (2008) had already discovered this in his study, which showed that 84% of the respondents who asked for L1 words translated into L2 were among intermediate learners. On the contrary, the low-proficient ones were the least to do so. Since the finding from Nazary's (2008) study were obtained from a questionnaire, it was not mentioned in what situations did the intermediate learners asked for L2 translations of L1 words and why it was not practiced among low-proficient learners.

Peer assistance in L1 is almost invisible in group A. Although the participants did communicate using L1 throughout the discussion, there were not many moments where peer assistance in L1 was identified when analyzing the transcription of their voice-recorded interaction. This had been brought up during the interview, where after the video was played before the participants in group A, the researcher asked S3 whether she was truly participating during the group discussion, since she was seen as doing the writing more often that talking. She giggled before responding that she was listening attentively while writing down her friends' ideas on paper. She also defended herself by stating that she did participate in the discussion, although not frequently because she had to write at the same time.

However, considering that S3 obtained the lowest grade among the three participants, the researcher believes that S3 had less opportunity to contribute ideas either because S1 and S2 had done the brainstorming, or S3's actual developmental level is lower than those of her two group members, resulting in less contribution to the discussion. This is the reason for the researcher to consider the possibility that since there were peers who were apparently more competent, the other peers follow suit, hence less or no necessity of any form of reference or asking for help. Asifa (2009) viewed this as a problem in peer correction, where weaker learners refuse to contribute to avoid from exposing their weakness and affect self-esteem. However, it is important to note that this problem was observed in group A of mixed ability students, but not in group B where their proficiency level was equal.

However, the observation from this study may have a logical reason. For intermediate learners who are more proficient, they are capable of using L2 in spontaneous conversations, such as talking to their peers in groups. They are also more likely to do so when converting their opinions and ideas generated from the discussion into L2 writing. On the other hand, low-proficient learners are less capable of doing so when having discussion among peers due to limited vocabulary, thus they find it more convenient to use L1 and switch to L2 whenever they feel appropriate and comfortable. If the low-proficient learners ask for any L1 term in L2, it is most likely to take place due to the urgency to complete L2 tasks, such as converting their ideas into L2 writing. The comparison between more proficient and less proficient learners as described above simply reflects what Vygotsky (1930) had explained in his SCT, that each individual has different actual developmental level even though they may be

92

of the same age. The less proficient ones constantly referred to L1 words to get access to wider L2 vocabulary for the same writing task, hence mediating L1 should not be ruled out as a way of learning L2 and develop their higher mental function.

4.5.3 Discovering and Making Use of New L2 Vocabulary

In addition, another factor for mediating L1 in group activity is to clarify the meaning of certain words that they are not familiar with. Since vocabulary may be one of the challenges faced by L2 learners, L1 becomes their only source of reference. From the main data, it was observed that the participants had defined 'interpersonal skills' in L1 to help them understand the word better so the discussion that followed might not be diverted from the given topic and to keep them on track. Similarly, they would go through the same process whenever they came across some new words in L2 that they believed to be related to the topic of the essay. This, however, applied to group B as they took the initiative to use dictionary and reference books available from the library to assist them in generating ideas.

As observed in group B interaction, when they came across new words, peer assistance in L1 took place. By asking their peers about L2 words and concepts and tried to translate them into L1, it allowed them to evaluate whether the words or concepts can be used in their essay writing or not. This entire process of generating ideas, which includes knowing, evaluating, and expanding ideas, was assisted by the participants asking for assistance from their peers in the meaning of new words. An example of this explanation is shown below:

93

33 S5: *Ni apa?* ((pointing to a word in the reference book))
33 S5: What's this? ((pointing to a word in the reference book))

34 S6: Talking with co-workers, *maksudnya kawan-kawan sekerja la. Kawan-kawan sekerja,* co-workers.
34 S6: Co-workers. Talking to co-workers, it means colleagues. Colleagues, co-workers.

It was observed that once they were aware of the meaning of 'co-workers', the term was frequently spoken throughout the discussion, and was even used as a main idea in their essay. It can be found as the topic sentence for the second paragraph which was written as 'Our first opinion is to maintaining and repairing relationships with coworkers'. This indicates how defining an unfamiliar L2 term in L1 also enabled them to explore other range of topics and ideas. In addition, the fact that they used the term 'co-workers' throughout the discussion instead of '*kawan-kawan sekerja*' gave an impression that mediating L1 does not necessarily make the low-proficient learners want to use L1 more frequently and becomes a barrier to their L2 learning. This finding does not entirely reject Auerbach's (1993) point of view that the use of L1 would hinder progress in L2 learning, yet it manages to prove that L1 can be a mediator for low-proficient learners to gain confidence in their learning (Fauziah et al., 2009).

In addition, the use of peer assistance in L1 in several occasions is presumed to be due to group B's weak mastery of English. Their level of proficiency was very much equal to one another, which means no one in the group was more competent than others. Therefore, everyone was free to ask one another for opinions and they depended more on L1, especially in getting the meaning of certain words to be included in their essay. It is observed that collaborative learning occurred in a way

that whenever one raised a question, active discussion took place which involved all group members in searching for the possible answer. Here is one example of how peer assistance in L1 had helped S5 to learn and use the term 'co-workers', which is labeled as line 33 to line 37. It began when S6 wrote the word on the paper and was noticed by S5. These conversations took place at different times throughout the discussion, but occurred in sequence:

33 S5: *Ni apa?* ((pointing to a word on the essay paper))
33 S5: What's this? ((pointing to a word written on the essay paper))

34 S6: Talking with co-workers, *maksudnya kawan-kawan sekerja la. Kawan-kawan sekerja,* co-workers.
34 S6: Co-workers. Talking to co-workers, it means colleagues. Colleagues, co-workers.

Based on S5's question in line 33, she was unsure or did not know the meaning of 'co-workers'. It is interesting to note that she asked for the meaning of the word as soon as she saw it without bothering to ask the question in L2. S5 could have asked "What's this?" instead, but asking even simple questions seemed to be natural done in L1. To identify the reason for this situation, it is necessary to observe the way they interacted with the researcher who was also their lecturer for the English course. In the beginning of the discussion, all participants in group B spoke L2 with the researcher when confirming the instruction for the assigned task. As expected, they turned to L1 to speak among themselves once the researcher left the room. This is similar to the teachers' feedback from interviews by Carless (2008), where one teacher noticed how the students used English in his/her presence, but switched to Cantonese when he/she moved to other groups of students.

It had been observed that S5 is less likely to ask questions to an L2 lecturer since she believed L2 must be used for such purpose. This observation is also similar to another feedback from Carless' (2008) interview, which shows that L2 teacher forced the learners to interact with him/her in L2. On the other hand, she found learning easier when she was free to use L1 to ask questions in L2 classrooms, and this could only take place among her peers. S6, who already knew the meaning of 'co-workers', gave the meaning of the word to S5 in line 34. After a while, S5 used the word that she had learned, but instead of saying 'co-workers', she said 'workers', as shown in line 35.

35 S5: Okay maintain a relationships with the workers.

36 S6: Ha, relationship with co-workers *kan*? Co-workers *pekerja kan*?
36 S6: Ha, relationship with co-workers, right? Co-workers means colleagues, right?

---

37 S5: *Pasaran, pasaran sekarang dia nak memerlukan seseorang yang dia boleh..* ability *dia dari segi* relationships with co-workers.
37 S5: The market, the current market needs someone who has.. his ability in terms of relationships with co-workers.

In a learning process, making mistakes is common. 'Worker', as defined by Cambridge dictionary, is a person who works for a company or organization but does not have a powerful position, while 'co-worker' is a person who someone works with, especially with a similar job or level of responsibility. S6 who possibly noticed the mistake made by S5, corrected her indirectly by repeating the word with 'co-' this time, in line 36. Nearing the end of the discussion, S5 was finally able to use the word 'co-worker' in her speech as noted in line 37. The above situation indicated that S6 had helped S5 going through her ZPD (Vygotsky, 1978) in learning and using a new

vocabulary in her speech, and this learning process was initiated by L1 as a mediator in the form of a question.

Based on the discussion, it can be observed how L1 plays a significant role in group discussion among both intermediate and low-proficient learners. Intermediate learners mediate L1 to help them convey their ideas to other peers, while low-proficient learners mediate L1 not only for delivery of information, but to understand certain terms and concepts as well so that they are able to expand their scope of discussion. Thus, it can be said that L1 mediation is a form of assistance for them to go through their ZPD, so that they can complete an L2 task.

Besides seeking for peer assistance, group B also performed a wider scope in peer correction, which covered spelling, pronunciation, as well as meaning of words. From the beginning of the group activity, participants in group B had taken things slow without showing any concern of the time restriction given to them. They took time browsing through books, looking up words in electronic dictionary, and correcting other members' mispronunciation, although such mistakes would not be visible on paper. They were behaving in such a way that in the perspective of the researcher, they seemed to be more focused on learning and exploring the language than completing the task. However, it could also be that they were searching for support to help them cope with their inadequate knowledge of certain L2 vocabulary.

In an example shown in line 38, while translating 'supervisor' into L1, S5 mispronounced 'visor' similar to 'vision' which was immediately corrected by S6 in line 39.

38 S5:Supervisior ((pronounced /suːpəviʒə/)), *penyelia*.
38 S5: Supervisor. Supervisior ((pronounced /suːpəviʒə/)), supervisor.

39 S6: <u>Supervisor!</u> ((pronounced /suːpəvaizə/))

40 S5: Aah, visor ((pronounced /vaizə/)).
40 S5: Yes, visor ((pronounced /vaizə/)).

Interestingly, it has been observed from the recorded data that the word 'supervisor' had already been mentioned five times by S4 and S6 at random moments before the above conversation took place. S5 only used the word for the first time after six times it was spoken, and she mispronounced it. This raises a question whether S5 had not noticed how 'supervisor' was pronounced correctly by her group members and learned from it. Unfortunately, this question remains unanswered as the researcher was not aware of this during the early recording analysis, therefore it was not asked during the stimulated recall interview.

The peer correction given in line 39 took place when group B was planning the first paragraph for the first main idea. The word 'supervisor' was not mentioned since then, until the group reached the planning of the third paragraph. While talking about how they should construct the third paragraph, S5 mentioned the word 'supervisor' again, but this time she pronounced it correctly. It is observed here that peer correction had allowed S5 to go through her ZPD and reach a higher potential developmental level (Vygotsky, 1978). Since the reason for this correction was not

asked to S5 during the interview, the researcher could only assume that although S5 had probably been hearing the other group members saying the word 'supervisor', she might not know how it should be pronounced until she said the word herself. Thus, a self-learning environment could prepare students to be ready to learn L2 (Lea et al., 2003). It may just be an improvement of a word pronunciation, but this can be one out of many potential improvements if correction and assistance from peers are done continuously.

4.6 How L1 Mediation Assists in Converting Ideas in L1 into Writing in L2

Speech and writing are different based on three perspectives, which are the uses and contexts, the degrees of formality and grammatical and text structure (Emmitt et al., 2007). Assuming that they were aware of these differences, it is also crucial to observe the way in which the participants try to transform their collective ideas and opinions from their speech into written form. Therefore, in order to respond to this research question, the data was analyzed by searching for the three elements that indicated the participants' conversation for writing purposes suggested by Emmitt et al. (2007) which are more use of L2, more formal and more issues with grammatical and sentence structures.

4.6.1 Translating Discussed Ideas Generated from L1 into L2

This is possibly the part where peer assistance in L2 is significant within the group discussion. The purpose of having peer assistance in L2 is to construct grammatically correct sentences or to translate their ideas produced in L1 into L2 for essay writing. It can be assumed that L1 was used mainly for the purpose of generating ideas, and

when the participants had reached an agreement on what to be included in their essay, they would then translate it into L2 for the writing task. To illustrate this, a conversation in group B is shown below:

20 S4: *Aku bagi pandangan je. Macam katakan kalau dia kerja dalam tu, dia bukan kerja untuk dia sorang.*
20 S4: I'm just giving my point of view. Let's say, if someone works there ((in an organization)), he's not working all by himself.

21 S5: *Dia bekerja dengan ramai!*
21 S5: He's working with many people!

22 S6: *Kerja dengan orang lain…*
22 S6: Working with others…

23 S4: *Pastu kalau tak* communicate, *kalau* just interpersonal *kan, dia cakap, dia sorang je paham. Tak guna jugak kan? Dia kena ada* interpersonal, and then *macam.. cadangan kalau dia salah menggunakan* interpersonal *tu kan, akan menyebabkan orang lain salah faham.*
23 S4: Then, if he doesn't communicate, if there's just interpersonal, when he speaks, he'll be the only one who understands. It's no use, right? He must have interpersonal, and then like.. I'm suggesting if he misuse interpersonal, it will lead to other people's misunderstanding.

24 S6: *Aa, boleh.*
24 S6: Aa, sure.

25 S4: So…

26 S4, S6: How we elaborate? ((laughed))

In the above example, conversation among participants in group B from line 20 until line 24 illustrates an active idea sharing by S4 regarding the importance of communication and having interpersonal skills when dealing with others in an organization. Her utterances were mostly in L1, and L2 was used only when mentioning interpersonal and communication which were the key points of the writing task. S6 paraphrased S5's statement as a signal of understanding in line 22, while line 24 indicates an agreement that the ideas can be used in their writing.

100

However, line 26 is the key point in which when it comes to putting their ideas into writing, conversion into L2 has to be done. Below is the immediate response to the question of how they needed to elaborate their ideas.

35 S5: Okay maintain a relationships with the workers.

36 S6: Ha, relationship with co-workers *kan*? Co-workers *pekerja kan*?
36 S6: Ha, relationship with co-workers, right? Co-workers means colleagues, right?

After a lengthy elaboration in L1, S5 only managed to make conclusion in L2 by saying 'maintain a relationships with coworkers'. Ironically, their intention was to elaborate on their ideas, not to summarize them. But lack of mastery of the target language prevented them from rephrasing the discussed ideas immediately into L2 as précised as how they elaborated the ideas in L1. This finding reveals the struggle that low-proficient learners had to deal with to express their ideas in L2. When Carless (2008) highlighted L2 teachers' frustration for not being able to get students to speak in L2, it seems clear now that these students needed more than just being forced to speak in the target language. It also raises concern that prohibiting low-proficient learners from using L1 in their L2 classrooms might hinder their learning progress, as opposed to the belief that the use of L1 hinders the learning progress.

Although the above excerpt took place in a group discussion, it is similar to research findings by Kavaliauskiene (2009) as discussed in Chapter Two, where L2 learners, specifically those at low and intermediate proficiency levels, often mentally translate ideas from their mother tongue into English in writing activities. Hence, it is concluded that for writing tasks, learners mentally translate ideas into L2 if the task

101

was done individually, but since this task was done in groups, translation of ideas was performed verbally by seeking for peer assistance from group members. Translation has even made itself known as a crucial element in writing process as acknowledged by Flower and Hayes (1981) in the Writing Process Model. An example below illustrates the translation of an L1 word into L2 for writing purpose.

41 S4: *'Dalam pasaran' orang kata apa? Pasaran.* ((reached for electronic dictionary))
41 S4: What is *'dalam pasaran'* in English?

42 S5: *Pasar, market. Market.* ((felt that S4 did not take her response seriously)) Eh BETUL LAH!
42 S5: *'Pasar'* is market. Market. ((felt that S4 did not take her response seriously)) IT IS!

43 S4: *Ha, sat.* ((still using the dictionary))
43 S4: Wait.

In line 42, instead of recalling for L2 word for '*pasaran'*, S5 shortened the word into '*pasar'*, a more familiar word for her so that she could recall its word in L2 more easily. Not only that, group B consists of low-proficient learners, yet they have shown an ability to be critical with L1 translation into L2. It is observed that S4 chose not to accept S5's translation of the word '*pasaran'* until she checked for its meaning from a more reliable source, which is the dictionary. The idea of including 'pasaran' in their essay can be found in the fourth paragraph which was written as 'Nowadays, for the job markets also focus on communication skill not just about intrapersonal but interpersonal skills most important compare to intrapersonal'. As discovered in another study conducted in a primary school (see Fauziah et al., 2009), the situation observed in this study illustrates the peer assistance and the use of tool, which is the dictionary, function as mediators to expand S4's vocabulary that later enabled her to include this term in their L2 writing. Since this observation was found similar in both

primary and tertiary levels, it can be concluded that such mediation exists across age groups. Hence mediation of L1 perhaps can be useful for primary school L2 learners as well.

Besides, these findings can be an eye-opening for L2 teachers who believe that the use of L1 will impede progress in the acquisition of English (Auerbach, 1993). By changing a longer word to a shorter word that she was familiar with and recall its term in L2, S5 actually illustrated memory recall as a form of thinking that enabled her to establish and find logical relations, which determines her potential developmental level (Vygotsky, 1978). As for S4, the researcher views S5's word translation as a form of peer assistance towards S4. S4 doubted that S5 translated the word '*pasaran'* correctly, but the difference was that instead of accepting or arguing with it, she searched for the right translation herself. It may not be proven that it had increased her language performance, but it may be a language input that had triggered an act of self-learning (Lea et al., 2003) and it certainly had helped in putting low-proficient learners' ideas into their essay.

4.6.2 Making Amendment to the Sentence Structures

The conversation below took place when the participants were in the process of writing the introductory paragraph. S3 had written 'In universities, normally student must have good communication to interact with other people'. At this moment, S2 was staring at the paper, looking as if she was about to say something. S1 noticed her expression, thus asking her if she wanted to make any amendment to the sentence.

103

44 S1: *S2 nak cakap apa?*
44 S1: S2, do you want to say something?

45 S2: *Tak, tak tau camna ayat nak cakap tu.*
45 S2: No, I don't know how to come up with a sentence.

46 S1: *Pastu nak cakap camna dalam Bahasa Melayu?*
46 S1: Then, how do you say it in Malay?

47 S2: *Tak, betul la ni. Tapi cam ada kurang sikit aa..*
47: No, it is okay. It just feels like it lacks something.

In line 45, S2's response gave an impression that she knew the sentence could be improved in some way, either by changing the entire sentence to a completely different one, or pointing out a grammatical error to be corrected. She was at a stage of learning where she could only sense that something was wrong with a sentence but not pointing out exactly what was wrong and came up with a better sentence. In another situation, S1 wanted to begin a sentence with 'there are', but was quickly disapproved by S2. She was supported by S3, claiming that they had already used 'there are' in the previous sentence. During the interview, the researcher enquired S2 on her action, stating that 'there are' is not grammatically incorrect, so why not using it. As expected, she responded that it would not sound nice to have two sentences that begin in the same way. This is related to memory recall, where S2 recalled what she had read, written, said, or listened, so she knew what to do and what not to do when constructing a good essay.

Of course, S1 could have asked S2 to carefully think of what she wanted to say, and then share her suggested improvised sentence by using L2. Instead, line 46 showed that S1 immediately asked S2 to say it in L1 rather than suggesting her to carefully think and construct her idea in L2. There are two possible reasons for such response

by S1, and the first reason is that S1 believed S2 should convey her idea into L1 if she could not express it in L2 for easier conveyance of ideas. Additionally, S1's response to S2 was made with an intention that she could help translating her words into L2. Another suggested reason is that participants in this group were concerned with the allocated time for task completion, thus S1 believed S2 should speak in L1 to save time rather than spending time thinking how to express it in L2. These possibilities are made because the question was not asked during the stimulated recall interview. What the researcher could do to confirm S1's action mentioned above was to ask the participant herself. Unfortunately, S1 could no longer be reached, thus this is considered a limitation to the analysis of this data. At this moment, the researcher could only suggest the cause of her action, and it is hoped that this may be confirmed in another future research.

4.6.3 Checking for Correct Form of Grammar

The observations from both groups reveal that students did not always turn to their L1 when they were having difficulties. Sometimes they also seek help from their peers when it came to the use of L2. They might need to confirm with their peers when they were not sure about the correct forms of tenses, spelling, choice of words, and even meaning.

In one conversation, the participants from Group A were about to write their first main point. They were looking for a suitable discourse marker, but seemed to be doubtful of the right form between 'first' and 'firstly'.

48 S3: Firstly. Firstly *ke*? ((looked at S2))
48 S3: Firstly. Firstly, isn't it? ((looked at S2))

49 S2: ((seemed to be thinking))

50 S3: *Kan*?
50 S3: Right?

51 S1: First *la*. First, *cakap*, first
51 S1: It's 'first'. First, say, first

52 S3: First? ((still looking at S2))

53 S2: First, uhh…

54 S1: First reason. *Ni* reason *kan*?
54 S1: First reason. It's a reason, right?

In line 48, 'firstly' was S3's initial choice, but she asked S2 if she should use the word, either to seek approval from her group members or to see if it was the correct form of discourse marker. Line 51 shows that S1 had offered her opinion in the matter by suggesting 'first' instead of 'firstly', but for some reason, S3 still seek for S2's approval regarding S1's suggestion, as shown in line 52. She repeated the word suggested by S1 with enquiry intonation to seek agreement from S2 to use the discourse marker to begin the paragraph of the first main idea. The problem was that S2 also seemed to be unsure of which form of discourse marker should they use to begin their first paragraph, thus she was not able to respond to S3's question. It is due to the use of 'firstly' which is associated with a sequence of steps and procedures rather than the delivery of ideas. At this point, it clearly shows that both S2 and S3 had a problem in selecting the right form of discourse markers.

54 S1: First reason. *Ni* reason *kan*?
54 S1: First reason. It's a reason, right?

On the other hand, S1 who had been contributing more to the discussion, tried to influence her group members on the relevance of using 'first' by adding 'reason' to the discourse marker as shown in line 54. Eventually, when S1 added 'reason' after the discourse marker, they all agreed on 'first reason' because 'firstly reason' is clearly grammatically incorrect. When they were about to begin writing the next paragraph of the essay, they were quick to choose 'second' instead of 'secondly'.

S1 clearly managed to get her group members out of confusion in choosing 'first' or 'firstly' by offering an alternative to the two options that they initially had. This is perceived by the researcher as a good example of how low-proficient L2 learners can still learn the language by the assistance from their peers who are more competent without necessarily require the use of L1 as the mediator. This also functions as evidence that although L1 mediation assists low-proficient L2 learners to cope with the task given and indirectly learn L2, it is obviously not the only way for them to do so. They also have the capability to learn the language without the use of L1, which supports the findings by Nazary (2008) that there are L2 learners who disagreed with the use of L1 in learning L2. Although Nazary (2008) assumed that it was because of the influence of the teachers who prohibit the use of L1, this study reveals that some learners voluntarily use L2 because they have some knowledge in L2, and they use the knowledge to solve language problems. Hence, L2 educators should not have any fear in allowing the use of L1 as a mediator among their students, as long as this method of learning is used only when it is necessary.

During the observation, there had been several occasions where peer correction took place. However, there is a slight difference in peer correction behaviour in both

groups. Since the one who was assigned to write the essay was the least proficient among members in group A, this group mostly displayed peer correction in terms of grammar and spelling. S1 was monitoring S3's writing, almost like a teacher monitoring her student, and once in a while she would say:

S1: "Nowadays. Days. *Ada* '-s'."
S1: "Nowadays. Days. With '-s'."

S1: "K-N-O-W-N"

S1: "Other countries. *Banyak* country *kan*? Countries. R-I-E-S."
S1: "Other countries. More than one country, right? Countries. R-I-E-S."

It is also important to note that even though L2 became the main focus in the process of putting ideas into writing, L1 remained as the mode of communication when the participants seek for peer assistance. When it came to writing in L2, group A made sure their essay had been given attention on the correct grammatical structures. In one example, S1 was guiding S3 with her spelling of the word 'possess' as observed in the conversation below:

55 S1: P-O-S-S, S-E-S. Possess.

56 S3: *Ada* –ed *tak*?
56 S3: Does it have –ed?

57 S1: Possess, *ha bukan. Ini* 'have', *mana boleh* 'possessed'.
57 S1: Possess, no. This is 'have', it can't be 'possessed'.

In line 56, instead of uttering in L2, such as "Does it have –ed?" or "With –ed?", S3 chose to speak in L1. The possible reason for this is that S3's mind was in the state of processing knowledge in L1, not L2. Although line 56 ended with a question mark,

the researcher chose to use the term 'speak' instead of 'ask' to describe S3's action. It is perceived as a form of private speech as explained by Vygotsky (1930) in his SCT because S3 did not direct it to or looking at anyone when it was spoken. However, since this event took place in a group, her group member actually responded to her. If it really was a question to seek assistance from her peers, S3 might need to construct the question using L2 in her mind before she spoke, which could have disrupt the flow of communication. Since they shared the same L1, using the language to form questions was an obvious and spontaneous choice. Considering the fact that they would rather use L1 than L2 in constructing even simple questions, this further indicates that their minds work in L1, and they were still not ready to use L2 in their everyday conversation.

Being students who obtained better grades, S1 and S2 seemed to be familiar with certain form of grammatical structures. They managed to sense that something was a little bit different from what they normally heard or used. For instance, when they were trying to use part of the written instruction into their essay, they wanted to pick '…because lack good communication and interpersonal skills'. This conversation was heard in group A's discussion:

58 S1: Because they lack good.. *macam ada yang kurang kan*?
58 S1: Because they lack good.. it feels like something's missing, right?

59 S2: *Kan*!
59 S2: Right!

60 S1: 'Because they lack good communication', *bukan* 'they lack good of'…
60 S1: 'Because they lack good communication', not 'they lack good of'…

61 S2: They lack good in communication skill.

109

62 S1: They lack of..they lack of, *saya rasa*.
62 S1: They lack of..they lack of, I think.

63 S2: 'Lack good' *je la. Tak payah* 'of'. *Kita ambil je ikut soalan*.
63 S2: Just write 'lack good'. Don't include 'of'. We just copy from the question.

In line 58, S1 felt that 'because they lack good' is missing something, and suggested that 'of' should be inserted after 'lack', as mentioned in line 62. There is a possibility that S1 and S2, who seemed to agree with S1 in line 59, had been using 'lack' as a noun rather than a verb, thus the necessity to include 'of'. 'Lack' as a noun is followed by 'of', as in 'most of his problems stem from a lack of confidence'. Meanwhile, 'lack' as a verb does not require 'of', as in 'he lacked the skills required for the job'. However, in line 63, S2 suggested using 'lack good communication' without 'of' anyway, in a logical assumption that it was written in an English question paper, so it should be grammatically correct. Interestingly, their essay showed that group A decided not to include 'of' for copying the exact words from the instruction, but include 'of' when they add another noun besides communication and interpersonal skills. This was found in the last sentence of the introductory paragraph which read '…university graduates are finding it difficult for them to get jobs because they lack good communication, interpersonal skill and lack of confident'.

The above conversation shows that they were already at a certain level of grammar knowledge in English as they were capable of arguing on the right form of grammar. They seemed to be doubtful in accepting a new, higher level of grammatical form since they had never used or heard anyone else using this form before. Yet at the same time they were confident enough that 'lack of' should always be together, they insisted on writing it in their essay. This observation resembles Tang's (2002) study in

110

which the respondents use L1 when trying to explain grammar points. Obviously S1 and S2 were not explaining grammar points at all, but the fact that they were actually having discussion about L2 grammar may not be ruled out as part of their learning process. Nonetheless, they would have learned the different ways of using 'lack' as a noun and verb if they took an effort to explore by referring to other sources. In this situation, a teacher or lecturer can provide guidance to assist them to move beyond their ZPD and learn something new, which in this case, learning different forms of a word depending on its function.

In another event during group B session, S4 came across the phrase 'maintaining and repairing relationship' in one of the reference books. She asked her group members for the meaning of 'repairing', and below was the response made by S6:

64 S6: Repairing means present tense, you know present tense?

S6 was asked during the stimulated recall interview of what she meant by "Repairing means present tense", and below was her response:

65 S6: i-n-g *kot*.
65 S6: I guess it's the i-n-g.

66 R: What do you mean by i-n-g?

67 S6: *macam.. macam 'sedang'*.
67 S6: It's like.. like 'in progress'.

It is noticeable that S6 also tried to make sense of something by using what she had already known. Her response indicated that she distinguished 'repair' and 'repairing'

111

based on what she had learnt in grammar class. By overgeneralizing grammatical rules, S6 probably had set her mind that a verb added with –ing, as mentioned in line 64, is a verb in the form of present continuous tense, thus her response in line 67. Her response did not answer S4's question and did not make the writing task completion any easier because what had been asked was the meaning of 'repairing' instead of which tense it was. However, it is worth mentioned that S4's question had triggered S6 to perform memory recall on what she seemed to have learnt in grammar lessons. She showed that by trying to assist her friend, she also gained the opportunity to assist herself in L2 learning (Lea et al., 2003).

4.7 Conclusion

Although both groups had been using L1 throughout the discussions, it seems that group B had been experiencing more independent learning of L2 by using L1 as the mediator during the process of completing the L2 writing task. On the other hand, group A had been merely using L1 as a medium of communication with minimal utilization of the language as mediator. The final chapter will summarize the entire study as well as present the overall conclusion of the findings from this study.

CHAPTER FIVE
CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This final chapter is the conclusion chapter. It is definitely crucial to summarize on how students at tertiary education are finding their L1 very useful in the process of completing writing tasks in their L2. In addition, there are some recommendations and suggestions that future researchers may need to take into account should they plan to explore further into this research area.

5.2 Summary of the Study

The incapability to master English as the L2 has become a major concern to the Malaysian government since university graduates are perceived as not competent enough by many employers to be accepted in their organisations. The MOE has planned and implemented numerous strategies to improve students' performance in English, which include making the language as the main medium of instruction in classrooms at tertiary level. This has become the school policy where L2 educators must employ L2 only lessons. However, low-proficient learners tend to use L1 when engaging in L2 learning activities because they found it useful, although strictly prohibited by the teachers. Therefore, this study has been done to explore their way of using L1, and to describe how L1 helped them in completing L2 tasks.

Six participants from a local university were selected and assigned an L2 writing task to be done in groups according to their proficiency level. Group A consisted of mixed ability learners, while group B consisted of same low proficient learners. Their

discussion during the completion of task was recorded using audio and video recording devices for later observation. Besides observation, stimulated recall interview was also conducted to justify their actions and utterances of the researcher's interest. The transcribed data was analysed using thematic analysis, and findings were recorded in sequence of the research questions. In brief, this study had observed some similarities and differences in the way low proficient and intermediate L2 learners worked together to complete an L2 writing task. Both groups had demonstrated and supported what previous quantitative studies had discovered as discussed in Chapter Four.

5.3 Conclusion of Findings

Group A had shown a more frequent use of L2 in their speech. However, the frequency of its use was unequal among the participants. The better able one successfully led the group to complete the essay, but limited the opportunity to lead a group discussion. It gave an impression that group A generally played by the rules. In the beginning of the group discussion, they were more concerned on time and format of the task. Once in a while, they would correct other members' grammar or spelling mistakes, but it was because the mistakes were written on paper. They were too focused on how their final work was presented that they missed the opportunity of undergoing the process of learning the language with their peers. Therefore, observing any form of L1 mediation that took place in this group was quite challenging, and if it did take place, it was very minimal. This also means that L1 mediation in L2 learning was less effective for low proficient learners if they were placed with better peers.

114

On the other hand, group B tend to use L1 more often throughout the discussion, yet they managed to complete the task as well. They did not only write the essay, they also opened up an opportunity to share their thoughts related to L2 vocabulary and grammatical structures. Therefore, Group B gave an impression that they were more to having exploration of L2 throughout the writing activity.

They took time flipping through books and looking up for new words in an electronic dictionary to generate ideas, and correcting each other's pronunciation once in a while although it was not observable on paper. Their focuses were not much on grammatical aspects, but more on expanding their vocabulary knowledge, constructing ideas and transforming them into words. They learned by willingly asking questions to their peers instead of being corrected most of the time, which was assumed by the researcher as a healthy way for low-proficient learners to learn L2. Active questioning from low-proficient learners is probably less likely to take place in typical L2 classrooms because they are constantly monitored by the teachers. They possibly refuse to ask questions in fear of having to do so in L2, not to mention feeling uneasy for being corrected most of the time which could be a barrier to the freedom of sharing ideas. Therefore, by preparing a conducive environment where L2 learners are allowed to use L1 with their peers, it could generate a healthy self-learning experience to them.

By observing these groups, it can be concluded that mediating L1 in learning L2 does have its necessity in assisting low-proficient learners in order to complete L2 tasks. Whether they focus more on the guidelines and a set of rules in completing an L2 task or take the opportunity to expand one's vocabulary and constructing grammatically

115

correct sentences in L2, L1 remains as their main source of reference. As long as it is conducted in group and all group members are collaborating with each other, L1 mediation could trigger a healthy discussion among low-proficient L2 learners.

By being aware of how L1 actually does mediate L2 learning among learners, it is therefore crucial for L2 teachers to take into account the need of low-proficient students to be allowed to, as well as assist them throughout the mediating process, but at the same time monitor and control such practice so that they might not become too dependent on it. The MOE may as well utilize the readily available expertise of L2 teachers among the Malays to educate low-proficient students, as well as providing more courses and programmes for L2 teachers to prepare them for L1 mediation as one of the teaching approaches in English classrooms.

5.4 Contribution of this Study

In terms of methodological contribution, it has been revealed in section 2.4 of the literature review that previous studies found L2 learners' positive preference of using L1 in their L2 classrooms by conducting surveys and questionnaires. This study has contributed by using qualitative research design to support previous quantitative studies, which provides some evidence of L1 mediation in the learning of L2 in the form of detailed description of how some L2 learners use L1 to mediate their learning process. The detailed description of L1 mediation can be achieved through the employment of audio recorded data and stimulated recall interviews.

Another contribution of this study is the emergence of specific categories or themes to describe the manner in which L1 mediation assists L2 learning among low-proficient

116

students. The themes emerged from this study include peer assistance in L1 which means seeking help from peers to clarify information about L2 using L1, peer assistance in L2 which means seeking help from peers to clarify information about L2, and the use of L1 to confirm that one understands and/or being understood by others.

While primary school children need L1 to express themselves and to participate in class activities, this study has shown that it is also relevant among low-proficient learners at tertiary level. A more convenient learning environment is required to the low-proficient learners who yearn to be allowed to use L1 as a mediator to L2 learning. It has been observed that they were still able to complete L2 task even though they resorted to L1, hence L1 mediates L2 learning despite the review of literature that shows teachers are not keen to enable students especially low-proficient ones to use L1 when they need it. In this study, L1 mediation is proficiency and contextually based, which depends on the learners' language proficiency level and peers' acceptance in using L1 during group discussion.

In addition, the findings emerged from this study may also broaden the perspective of L2 teachers regarding the application of L1 mediation as another teaching approach that is worth tested in their classrooms, since some L2 teachers prefer L2-only teaching approach, while others are bound to the policy of English as the medium of instruction as mentioned in section 2.5 in Chapter Two. In addition, this study and other related studies with similar findings may become the factor for the policy makers in Malaysian education to review the policy of English as the medium of

instruction in several universities in Malaysia, specifically in consideration of the low proficient students.

5.5 Recommendation from this Study

The use of L1 to mediate L2 learning is suggested to be used for low-proficient as well as any second language learners who seem to have preference to this method of language learning. Based on previous studies and literature review, some L2 learners rely on L1 to cope with the L2 teaching and learning activities. However, it is recommended that L1 mediation is used only whenever necessary without omitting the practice of L2 for improvement of language skills. In this case, L2 teachers have the authority to decide when and when not to use L1 as a mediator in their classrooms.

In a student-centred approach, teachers function as a facilitator to monitor students' learning activities in an L2 classroom. Thus, one recommendation for L2 teachers is to function as facilitators during low-proficient students' use of L1 instead of strictly prohibit its use in total. This action is crucial so that with guidance from the teachers, L1 mediation may not only help low-proficient students with the lessons, it may improve their language skills as well.

In addition, the MOE and academic administration have gone to extra length to keep improving Malaysian students' proficiency level in English. Apart from other steps to achieve this objective, these organizations are recommended to review previous studies related to the mediation of L1 in L2 learning. If it is found effective, hopefully

they will consider this as another relevant teaching approach to be implemented in many academic institutions especially in sub-urban and rural areas.

5.6 Recommendation for Future Studies

The selected participants in this study are those who are considered as low-proficient based on the minimum grade requirement as mentioned in section 3.3. In order to look further into the practicality and effectiveness of L1 mediation in learning L2 among low-proficient students, it is suggested that new research participants are selected among those who have failed the BEL120 subject with grade C- and below. In other words, the potential students who may be defined as low-proficiency students are those who are required to repeat BEL120 subject in the following semester. This is because low-proficiency is defined differently based on a range of academic criteria mentioned in section 1.7. Since this study focuses on low-proficient students in a selected L2 classroom, another study can be done by selecting those who actually failed the subject.

In addition, future researchers are recommended to consider the end product of the group discussion, which is the written essay. This study only looks into the mediation of L1 while completing an L2 task. Perhaps future researchers may also investigate whether this practice can actually improve their proficiency level or they are left with more errors by analyzing the written essays by both groups.

Apart from that, the execution of stimulated recall interviews needs to be improvised. One reason is during the stimulated recall interviews, the participants were having difficulty explaining what triggered their own speech and actions, and that the

researcher did not raise in-depth questions to find out more about the participants' reasons of actions and speech. Another disadvantage when having stimulated recall interview is that it needs to be conducted as soon as possible. This resulted in some issues overlooked by the researcher or the interview questions were not properly structured, thus some areas of the observed data remained unanswered. In order to overcome such disadvantage, it is highly recommended that pilot study is carried out not only to serve the purpose of improvising the method of data collection, but also to develop the researcher's credibility as an interview designer and the ability to conduct a successful interview.

5.7 Conclusion

To sum it up, L1 displays a significant role in the learning of L2, and it is especially so among low-proficient learners. L2 learning using L1 still occurs even without restriction from doing so. In tertiary education, low-proficient ones mediate L1 to learn new vocabulary in L2 and to interact with classmates and teachers for enquiries and sharing of ideas. Within the competition of getting promising jobs among fresh graduates, and to meet the most important criteria employers are looking for among candidates, low-proficient L2 learners at tertiary education may still have the opportunity to compete with more advance learners in graduates' job hunt to avoid from being the ones left behind.

REFERENCES

Abd Ghafar, M. (2012). Pengiktirafan SPM di peringkat antarabangsa. *Pengumuman Analisis Keputusan Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia (SPM) Tahun 2011.* Retrieved from http://58.27.16.93/v1/files/spm/2012/Teks%20ucapan%20SPM%202011-21032012.pdf

Adegoriola, B. (2005). Translation in teaching and learning. *Translation and the Globalization of Knowledge*. Pahang: PTS Professional Publishing Sdn. Bhd.

Ahlam, A. H. (2010). Mother tongue maintenance and second language sustenance: A two-way language teaching method. *TESOL Journal, 2,* 144-158.

Al-Nofaie, H. (2010). The attitudes of teachers and students towards using Arabic in EFL classrooms in Saudi Public schools – A case study. *Novitas Royal: Research on Youth and Language, 4*(1), 64-95.

Ambigapathy, P. (2002). English language teaching in Malaysia today. *Asia Pacific Journal of Education, 22*(2), 35-52.

Asifa, S. (2009). Peer correction in ESL classrooms. *BRAC University Journal, 6*(1), 11-19.

Atkinson, R., & Shiffrin, R. (1968). Human memory. A proposed system and its control processes. In K. Spence & J. Spence (Eds.), *The Psychology of Learning and Motivation*. Princeton, NJ: Van Nostrand.

Auerbach, E. R. (1993). Reexamining English only in the ESL classroom. *TESOL Quarterly, 27*(1), 9-32.

Azrina, S. (2009). Adakah pelajar lemah diktiraf dalam sistem pendidikan negara? *Institut Kefahaman Islam Malaysia*. Retrieved from http://www.ikim.gov.my/index.php/ms/berita-harian/7919-adakah-pelajar-lemah-diktiraf-dalam-sistem-pendidikan-negara

Baddeley, A., Gathercole, S., & Papagno, C. (1998). The phonological loop as a language learning device. *Psychological Review, 105,* 158-173.

Bernama. (2013, March 21). 15,793 calon SPM 2012 peroleh semua A. *Sinar Harian.* Retrieved from http://www.sinarharian.com.my/nasional/15-793-calon-spm-2012-peroleh-semua-a-

Botley, S., Haykal, H. Z., & Monaliza, S. (2005). Lexical and grammatical transfer by Malaysian student writers. *Translation and the Globalization of Knowledge*. Pahang: PTS Professional Publishing Sdn. Bhd.

Boud, D. (2001). Introduction: making the move to peer learning. *Peer Learning in Higher Education: Learning from & with Each Other*. Eds. D. Boud, R. Cohen & Sampson, J. London: Kogan Page Ltd.

Bowman, M. (1994). Using video in research. *Scottish Council for Research in Education*. Edinburgh: SCRE.

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, *3*(2), 77-101.

Burden, P. R., & Byrd, D. M. (2003). *Methods for Effective Teaching* (3rd ed.). Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.

Cantillon, P., & Glynn, L. (2009). Peer-assisted learning. In Y. Carter & N. Jackson (Eds.), *Medical Education and Training: From Theory to Delivery*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Carless, D. (2008). Student use of the mother tongue in the task-based classroom. *ELT Journal, 62*(4), 331-338.

Cheung, H. (1996). Nonword span as a unique predictor of second-language vocabulary learning. *Developmental Psychology, 32,* 867-873.

Chua, Y. P. (2012). *Mastering Research Methods*. Selangor: McGraw-Hill

Chuah, H., Evanson, C. P., & Fatimah, D. (2010). *MUET: Complete Text and Guide*. Selangor: Global Mediastreet.

Connell, S., & Charles, P. (2014). *Deep: Online Masters in Educational Technology*. Retrieved from http://cadres.pepperdine.edu/omcadre6/BookProject/vygotsky.htm

Conner, M. G. (2000). *Understanding the Difference between Men and Women.* Retrieved from http://www.oregoncounseling.org/

Creswell, J. W. (2007). *Qualitative Inquiry & Research Design: Choosing among Five Approaches* (2nd ed.). California, CA: SAGE Publications.

Creswell, J. W. (2014a). *Educational Research: Planning, Conducting and Evaluating Quantitative and Qualitative Research* (4th ed.). Harlow, Essex: Pearson.

Creswell, J. W. (2014b). *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative & Mixed Methods Approaches* (4th ed.). California, CA: SAGE Publications.

Cruickshank, D. R., Jenkins, D. B., & Metcalf, K. K. (2009). *The Act of Teaching* (5th ed.). Boston: McGraw Hill.

Daniels, H., & Bizar, M. (1998). Methods that matter: six structures for best practice classrooms. *An Inservice Study Guide*. Portland, ME: Stenhouse Publishers.

Denham, K., & Lobeck, A. (2013). Our capacity to acquire language. *Linguistics for Everyone: An Introduction* (2nd ed.). Kentucky, KY: Cencage Learning.

Dept. of Statistics. (2012). *Labour Force Statistics, Malaysia, February 2012*. Retrieved from www.statistics.gov.my

Divya, N. W. (2012). Traditional teaching methods vs. CLT: A Study. *Frontiers of Language and Teaching, 3,* 128.

Dujmovic, M. (2007). The use of Croatian in the EFL classroom. *Metodicki Obzori, 2*(1), 91-101.

123

Dundon, T., & Ryan, P. (2010). Interviewing reluctant respondents: Strikes, Henchmen and Gaelic games. *Organizational Research Methods, 13*(3), 581-582.

Ellis, R. (2008). *Second Language Acquisition*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Emmitt, M., Komesaroff, L., & Pollock, J. (2007). *Language & Learning: An Introduction for Teaching* (4th ed.). New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Exon, S. N. (2008). The effects that mediator styles impose on neutrality and impartiality requirements of mediation. *University of San Francisco Law Review*. San Francisco: USA.

Fairclough, N., Mulderrig, J., & Wodak, R. (2011). Critical discourse analysis. In T. A. Van Dijk (Ed.), *Discourse Studies: A Multidisciplinary Introduction* (2nd ed.). London: Sage Publication.

Farquhar, (2012). *What is Case Study Research?* Retrieved from http://www.sagepub.com/upm-data/46240_Farquhar.pdf

Fatimah, A. (2005). ESL/EFL: Teaching/learning and translation. *Translation and the Globalization of Knowledge*. Pahang: PTS Professional.

Fauziah, A. R., Hood, P., & Coyle, D. (2009). 'Becoming experts': learning through mediation. *Malaysian Journal of Learning & Instruction, 6,* 1-21.

Fgatabu. (2012). *Effectiveness of Teaching Methods in English Language on Acquisition of English Language Skills in Public Secondary Schools in Nairobi County, Kenya*. Retrieved from http://eap.uonbi.ac.ke/node/866

Flower, L. & Hayes, J. R. (1981). A cognitive process theory of writing. *College Composition and Communication, 32*(4), 365-387.

Foster, P., & Ohta, A. S. (2005). Negotiation for meaning and peer assistance in second language classrooms. *Applied linguistics, 26*(3), 402-430.

Fox-Turnbull, W. (2009, August). *Stimulated recall using autophotography - a method for investigating technology education.* Paper presented at Pupils' Attitudes Toward Technology Conference, The Netherlands.

Gan, Z. (2012). Understanding L2 speaking problems: Implications for ESL curriculum development in a teacher training institution in Hong Kong. *Australian Journal of Teacher Educations, 37*(1), 43-59.

Gower, R., Phillips, D., & Walters, S. (1995). *Teaching Practice: A Handbook for Teachers in Training*. London: Macmillan.

Great Schools Partnership. (2013). Proficiency. *The Glossary of Education Reform*. Retrieved from http://edglossary.org/proficiency/

Guest, G., Namey, E. E., & Mitchell, M. L. (2013). *Collecting Qualitative Data: A Field Manual for Applied Research.* USA: SAGE Publications.

Hancock, B., Ockleford, E., & Windridge, K. (2009). An introduction to qualitative research. *National Institute for Health Research*. Nottingham: The NIHR RDS.

Have, P. T. (2007). *Doing Conversation Analysis: A Practical Guide (*2nd ed.). London: Sage Publication.

Hazita, A. (2006). English language in rural Malaysia: Situating global literacies in local practices. *3L: Journal of Language, Linguistics, and Literature, 11,* 99-120.

Hesse-Biber, S. (2010). *Analyzing Qualitative Data: With or Without Software*. Retrieved from http://www.bumc.bu.edu/crro/files/2010/07/Hesse-Bieber-4-10.pdf

Hummel, K., & French, L. (2010). Phonological memory and implications for the second language classroom. *Canadian Modern Language Review, 66,* 371-391.

Iacono, J., Brown, A., & Holtham, C. (2009, June). Research methods - A case example of participant observation. *The 8th European Conference on Research Methodology for Business and Management Studies* (pp. 178). Malta: University of Malta.

IPPTN. (2003). *Kajian masalah pengangguran di kalangan siswazah.* Kementerian Pengajian Tinggi Malaysia.

Isahak, H., Abdul Latif, G., Md Nasir, M., Abdul Halim, I., & Mariam, M. N. (2008). *Kesan dasar pengajaran Matematik dan Sains dalam bahasa Inggeris di sekolah rendah.* (Unpublished Doctoral dissertation.) Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris, Malaysia.

Jacques. (2000). Lexical and grammatical transfer by Malaysian student writers. *Translation and the Globalization of Knowledge*. Pahang: PTS Professional Publishing Sdn. Bhd.

Jamal, A., Lim, H. E., Russayani, I., Fauziah, A. R., Filzah, M. I., & Ismi, A. I. (2012). Keberkesanan program Finishing School untuk meningkatkan kebolehpasaran graduan. In Y. L. Koo, M. M. S. Fazal, & I. Kemboja (Eds.), *Memperkukuh Dasar Pengajian Tinggi Melalui Penyelidikan*. Putrajaya: KPTM.

Januleviciene, V., & Kavaliauskiene, G. (2000). To translate or not to translate in teaching ESP. *Journal for English Language Teacher Education, 3*(3), 9-13.

Jorgenson, J. (1992). Communication, rapport, and the interview: A social perspective. *Communication Theory, 2*(2), 148-156.

Juani Munir, A. B. (2015, March 4). Pencapaian menurun: 28 mata pelajaran mengikut gred GPMP meningkat. *Utusan Online*. Retrieved from www.utusan.com.my

Juliana, O. (2005). English language use among EFL learners in Sunway University College. *Sunway Academic Journal, 2,* 93-100.

Kavaliauskiene, G. (2009). Role of mother tongue in learning English for Specific Purposes. *ESP World, 8*(1), 1-12.

Kinginger, C. (2002). Defining the zone of proximal development in US foreign language education. *Applied Linguistics, 23*(2), 240-261.

Kvale, S. (2007). *Doing Interviews*. London: SAGE Publications.

Lacey, A., & Luff, D. (2001). *Trent Focus for Research and Development in Primary Health Care: An Introduction to Qualitative Analysis*. University of Sheffield: Trent Focus Group.

Lantolf, J. P., & Thorne, S. L. (2006). *Sociocultural Theory and Second Language Learning*. Retrieved from http://old.fltrp.com/download/07041802.pdf

Lantolf, J. P. (2000). Introducing sociocultural theory. *Sociocultural Theory and Second Language Learning*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Lea, S. J., Stephenson, D., & Troy, J. (2003). Higher education students' attitudes to student-centred learning: Beyond 'educational bulimia'. *Studies in Higher Education, 28*(3), 321-334.

Loi, C. K. (2005). Translation in the teaching and learning of ESL. *Translation and the Globalization of Knowledge*. Pahang: PTS Professional.

Long, M. H., & Porter, P. A. (1985). Group work, interlanguage talk, and second language acquisition. *TESOL Quarterly, 19*(2), 207-212.

Lucey, H., Brown, M., Denvir, H., Askew, M., & Rhodes, V. (2003). Girls and boys in the primary maths classroom. In C. Skelton & B. Francis (Eds.), *Boys and Girls in the Primary Classroom*. Milton Keynes: Open University Press.

Lutz, S., & Huitt, W. (2003). Information processing and memory: Theory and applications. *Educational Psychology Interactive*. Retrieved from http://www.edpsycinteractive.org/

Maisarah, S. R. (2014). Keputusan SPM terbaik. *Utusan Online*. Retrieved from www.utusan.com.my

Malaysia Education Blueprint (2012, September). *Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013-2025: Preliminary Report – Executive Summary.* Kuala Lumpur: Ministry of Education.

Malaysian Examinations Council. (2006). *Malaysian University English Test (MUET): Regulations, Test Specifications, Test Format and Sample Questions*. Retrieved from www.mpm.edu.my

Malone, D. (2012). Theories and research of second language acquisition. *Reading for Day 2, Topic 2LA Theories*. Retrieved from http://www.sil.org/

Masa BM, BI Ditambah 2011. (2010, March 21). *Utusan Online*. Retrieved from http://www.utusan.com.my/utusan/info.asp?y=2010&dt=0321&pub=Utusan_Malay sia&sec=Dalam_Negeri&pg=dn_06.htm

Ministry of Education. (2012). *National Higher Education Strategic Plan*. Retrieved from http://www.moe.gov.my/en/pelan-strategik-pengajian-tinggi-negara

Morahan, M. (2010). *The Use of Students' First Language (L1) in the Second Language (L2) Classroom*. Retrieved from http://citcsudan.org/

Mouhamad, M. (2009). Re-examining the role of L1 in the EFL classroom. *UGRU Journal*, *8*, 10-13.

Muhamad Iqbal, R. (2013). Pencapaian keseluruhan SPM 2012 menurun. *Utusan Online*. Retrieved from www.utusan.com.my

Mustafa, D. (2009). *Education and Community-English Language Programme: Pulau Aman*. Retrieved from http://eprints.usm.my/10033/

Nazary, M. (2008). The role of L1 in L2 acquisition: Attitudes of Iranian university students. *Novitas Royal*, *2*(2), 138-153.

Neuman, W. L. (2003). *Social Research Methods: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches* (5th ed.). USA: Allyn & Bacon.

Norazman, A. M. (2005). The role of mental translation in second language reading comprehension processes. *Translation and the Globalization of Knowledge*. Pahang: PTS Professional.

Noriah, I., Suhaidi, E., Intan Safinas, M. A. A., Dhayapari, P. P., & Indrani, M. (2010). Exploring ESL students' apprehension level and attitude towards academic writing. *The International Journal of Learning, 17*(6), 475-483.

Normazidah, C. M., Koo, Y. L., & Hazita, A. (2012). Exploring English language learning and teaching in Malaysia. *GEMA Online Journal of Language Studies, 12*(1), 35-51.

Nunan, D. (1999). *Second Language Teaching and Learning*. Boston: Heinle & Heinle

Nurmin, B., & Ismail, S. (2005). Exploration on the influence of translation in teaching and learning process in engineering subject. *Translation and the Globalization of Knowledge*. Pahang: PTS Professional.

Ohta, A. S. (2005). *Interlanguage pragmatics in the zone of proximal development*. Retrieved from www.elsevier.com/locate/system

Orb, A., Eisenhauer, L., & Wynaden, D. (2001). Ethics in qualitative research. *Journal of nursing scholarship, 33*(1), 93-96.

Osman, R. H., & Rajah, R. (2011). Poverty and student performance in Malaysia. *International Journal of Institutions and Economies, 3*(1), 61-76.

Parmjit, S., Gurnam, S. K., & Noor Shah, M. S. (2009). *An Assessment of the Policy of Teaching Mathematics and Science in English: A Malaysian Perspective*.

Patton, M. Q. (2002). Qualitative Research and Evaluation Method (3rd ed.) Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Polit, D. F., Beck, C. T., & Hungler, B. P. (2001). *Essentials of nursing research: methods, appraisals and utilisation* (5th ed.). Philadelphia, PA: Lippincott.

Prodromou, L. (2002). *From mother tongue to other tongue*. Retrieved from http://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/think/methodology/mothertongue.shtml

Resnik, D. B. (2010). What is ethics in research & why is it important. *Research Triangle Park, North Carolina: National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences/National Institute of Health.*

Rief, L. (1990). Finding the value in evaluation: Self-evaluation in a middle school classroom. *Educational Leadership, 47*(6), 24-29.

Roussol, K. H. (2010). *Teachers' and Students' Perceptions towards the Use of Arabic in Secondary Level English Language Classrooms.* Sharjah: AUS.

Rubin, A., & Babbie, E. (2010). *Essential Research Methods for Social Work* (2nd ed.). USA: Cengage Learning.

Rundell, M., & Fox, G. (2002). *Macmillan English Dictionary: For Advanced Learners*. UK: Macmillan Education.

Ryan, G. W., & Bernard, H. R. (2002). Data management and analysis methods. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.). *Handbook of Qualitative Research* (2nd ed.). London: Sage Publications.

Sacks, H. (1995). *Lectures on Conversation*. USA: Blackwell Publishing.

Schepens, A., Aelterman, A., & Van Keer, H. (2007). Studying learning processes of student teachers with stimulated recall interviews through changes in interactive cognitions. *Teacher and Teacher Education, 23,* 457-472.

Schweer, C. W. (1999). Using L1 in the L2 classroom. *English Teaching Forum, 37*(2). Retrieved from http://exchanges.state.gov/forum/ vols/vol37/no2/p6.html

Scott, G., & Garner, R. (2013). *Doing Qualitative Research Designs, Methods and Techniques*. New Jersey: Pearson Education.

Scott, V. M. & de la Fuente, M. J. (2008). What's the problem? L2 learners' use of the L1 during consciousness-raising, form-focused tasks. *The Modern Language Journal, 92*(1), 100-113.

130

Service, E. (1992). Phonology, working memory, and foreign-language learning. *Quarterly Journal of Experimental Psychology, 45A,* 21-50.

Sgubini, A., Prieditis, M., & Marighetto, A. (2004). Arbitration, mediation and conciliation: differences and similarities from an international an Italian business perspective. *Bridge Mediation LCC*. Retrieved from http://www.mediate.com/articles/sgubinia2.cfm

Silverman, D. (2006). *Interpreting Qualitative Data: Methods for Analyzing Talk, Text and Interaction*. London: Sage Publications.

Smith, H. W. (1981). *Strategies of Social Research*. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall.

Steiner, V. J., & Mahn, H. (1996). Sociocultural approaches to learning and development: A Vygotskian framework. *Educational Psychologist, 31*(3/4), 191-206.

Stough, L. M. (2001). *Using Stimulated Recall in Classroom Observation and Professional Development.* Retrieved from http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED457214.pdf

Swain, M., & Deters, P. (2007). "New" mainstream SLA theory: expanded and enriched. *The Modern Language Journal, 91,* 820-836.

Szmalec, A., Brysbaert, M., & Duyck, W. (2012). Working memory and (second) language processing. *Memory, Language, and Bilingualism: Theoretical and Applied Approaches.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Tam, S. S., Kan, N. H., & Ng, L. L. (2010). Low proficiency learners in synchronous computer-assisted and face-to-face interactions. *Turkish Online Journal of Educational Technology-TOJET*, *9*(3), 61-75.

Tang, J. (2002). Using L1 in the English classroom. *English Teaching Forum, 40*(1), 36-43.

Thang, S. M., Ting, S. L., & Nurjanah, M. J. (2011). Attitudes and motivation of Malaysian secondary students towards learning English as a second language: A case study. *3L: The Southeast Asian Journal of English Language Studies, 17*(1), 40-54.

UNESCO. (2005). *Exploring and Understanding Gender in Education: A Qualitative Research Manual for Education Practitioners and Gender Focal Points.* Bangkok: UNESCO Asia and Pacific Regional Bureau for Education.

Van Teijlingen, E. R., & Hundley, V. (2010). The importance of pilot studies. *Pan-Pacific Management Review*.

Vincent, P., & Tan, C. K. (2005). Translation difficulties among undergraduate student teachers. *Translation and the Globalization of Knowledge*. Pahang: PTS Professional.

Vygotsky, L. (1978). Interaction between learning and development. *Mind and Society.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Vygotsky, L. (1930). *Mind and Society.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Wang, X. (2009). Exploring the negative transfer on English learning. *Asian Social Science*, *5*(7), 138-143. Retrieved from www.ccsenet.org/journal.html

Wee, R. (2009). Sources of errors: An interplay of interlingual influence and intralingual factors. *European Journal of Social Sciences, 11*(2), 349-359.

Wertsch, J. V. (2007). Mediation. In H. Daniels, M. Cole & J. Wertsch (Eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Vygotsky.* New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.

Wolfinger, N. H. (2002). On writing fieldnotes: collection strategies and background expectancies. *Qualitative Research, 2*(1), 85-95.

Wooffitt, R. (2005). *Conversation Analysis and Discourse Analysis: A Comparative and Critical Introduction*. London: Sage Publication.

Yin, R. K. (2009). *Case Study Research: Design and Methods* (3rd ed.). California, CA: Sage Publications.

Yin, R. K. (2011). *Qualitative Research From Start to Finish*. New York, NY: The Guilford Press.

Yule, G. (2012). *The Study of Language*. UK: Cambridge University Press.