

**AN INVESTIGATION OF THE PREDICTORS OF  
L2 WRITING AMONG ADULT ESL STUDENTS**

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The material presented in this thesis is the original work of the candidate except as acknowledged in the text, and has not been previously submitted, either in part or in whole, for a degree at this or any other University.

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## ABSTRACT

The three studies reported in this thesis investigated the contributing factors of L2 writing among adult ESL learners in the academic setting. The major purpose of this research was to explore the relationship between L2 proficiency, writing strategies, writing attitude, writing errors and L2 writing performance. This thesis aimed to provide insights for the contributing factors that are predictive of L2 writing performance in adult ESL learners, studying in English and non-English dominant settings.

Study 1 (reported in Chapter 3) focused on determining the appropriate measures for investigating the individual factors of writing performance; particularly learners' writing strategies, learners' second language proficiency, first language (L1) interference and their relation to writing performance. Thirty-one intermediate students of L2 served as participants. A measure of vocabulary size and a writing strategy questionnaire were administered to the students. Findings in this study indicated that most of the participants' planning strategies were limited to having a mental or written plan whereas over half of the respondents reported that they always start with an introduction and were more likely to stop drafting after a few sentences. In terms of drafting strategies, it was found that most respondents reread what they had written to get ideas on how to continue but did not go back to their outline to make changes in it. With regard to L1 use, a majority of participants do not write bits of text in their native language. Nevertheless, quite a number of participants indicated that they would write in their L1 if they don't know a word in English. Findings in this study also suggested that participants' biggest concerns were related to grammar and vocabulary, which resulted in them making surface level changes

and checking. An overall analysis of participants' writing output and responses from the questionnaire also provided important insights to the improvement of the measures. The revision process included rewording and rephrasing ambiguous items, removing irrelevant items from the questionnaire and restructuring the writing task for the next study.

In Study 2 (presented in Chapter 4), a follow-up study was conducted to examine L2 writers' proficiency level, writing attitude, writing errors and writing strategies in an English-dominant setting. Nine research questions were designed to guide the study framework and gather specific data regarding the research aims. A writing measure, vocabulary tests and a questionnaire were administered to the students. Findings from Study 2 indicated that L2 proficiency, particularly vocabulary size, was related to writing performance. In addition, it was also discovered that L2 writers who performed poorly were prone to performing writing strategies related to surface level checking. Therefore, it was concluded that linguistic barriers in L2 affect both writing performance and students' ability in applying the effective strategies in writing. Apart from that, Study 2 also found that the use of L1 and translation into L2 was associated with lower writing performance. Additionally, Study 2 found that pronoun, word and sentence errors were the most prevalent errors among ESL students. A possible reason for this is because L2 students need to work with two languages while writing, mainly the grammar rules in English which are not found in their L1 as well as their own native language. Thus, L2 students face the challenge of working out English grammar rules while writing. Overall, findings in this study suggest that prevalent writing errors in English may be a sign of L1 interference and that as the use of L1 increases, writing performance decreases.

In Study 3 (reported in Chapter 5), the role of proficiency level, writing attitude, writing errors and writing strategies was explored by measuring the relationship between writing attitude scores, errors in writing, strategy use and essay scores. Additionally, the role of L2 proficiency in writing performance was also investigated by assessing the relationship between vocabulary size scores, writing errors and writing performance. Findings from Study 3 revealed unexpected findings with regard to the relationship between L1 use and writing performance among the three sample groups. L1 use was found to be correlated with writing performance for Group A but not Groups B and C. It was argued that L2 writers of different L2 proficiency level and academic experience may have different orientations of L1 use. Further work on the impact of L1 use on L2 writing will be needed in order to provide insights into this area. With regard to writing errors, a relationship between errors and writing performance was reported. It was found that subject verb agreement error appeared to be a common factor for the three groups in the study that was related to writing performance. In addition, errors were also significantly correlated with L2 proficiency, suggesting that as L2 proficiency increased, errors decreased. Overall, Study 3 argues for the importance of developing and enhancing learners' L2 proficiency to reduce errors and improve learners' writing performance. Additionally, Study 3 also argues for the need to emphasize effective writing strategies in the ESL writing classroom.

## **PUBLICATIONS ARISING FROM THIS THESIS**

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# **CHAPTER ONE**

## **OVERVIEW OF WORK**

### **1.1 Introduction**

The work reported in this thesis consists of an investigation of the predictors of writing performance among English as second language learners (ESL) at the tertiary level education. The main aims of this thesis were to identify the predictive variables of second language (L2) writing performance and inform the teaching of writing in the academic setting.

The act of writing is considered one of the most difficult skills to master in a student's academic life. In order to write well, one needs to have a wide range of knowledge and ability which are usually acquired through training and schooling. Writing in the second language is even more challenging as ESL writers have a limited amount of topical, rhetorical and linguistic knowledge in the target language. As Hyland (2003) argues, the most obvious factor that distinguishes many second language writers is the difficulty they have in adequately expressing themselves in English. In order to produce a text, L2 writers need to put in a lot of effort and practice in composing, developing and analysing ideas in the target language. This process requires the intricate activation and coordination of several cognitive-linguistic skills (Scott, 1999). In other words, L2 writers need to use a second language writing system and simultaneously perform a range of complex cognitive tasks such as making a decision on content relevant to a topic, selecting proper vocabulary and grammar to form sentences, organising sentences into a paragraph and consider the writing purpose and intended

audience. The coordination between these linguistic and cognitive tasks is what makes L2 writing difficult. The focus of the present work is on the interaction between these cognitive and linguistic factors and how they relate to learners' writing performance. The main aim of the present work is to determine the factors that are predictive of L2 writing performance and inform the development of an L2 writing framework that can guide both the teaching and the assessment of L2 written production.

## **1.2 Predictors of Second Language Writing**

One of the factors that has been said to relate to L2 writing performance is L2 proficiency. In second language acquisition (SLA) studies, the term 'language proficiency' is defined in a number of ways. According to Unsworth (2005), "language proficiency can be used as a global indicator of an L2 learner's abilities in the target language, as well as specific aspects of linguistics competence, such as phonological, syntactic, morphological, lexical and/ or discourse skills" (p.153). In the literature of second language writing, the term L2 proficiency has been used to refer to receptive and/or productive vocabulary knowledge and lexical proficiency. A lower level of L2 proficiency is said to be related to more difficulty in L2 writing (Zainuddin & Moore, 2003), while a higher level of L2 writing is related to higher L2 writing ability (Cumming, 1989; Schoonen *et al.* 2003), greater fluency (Hirose & Sasaki, 1994; Chenowith & Hayes, 2001) and less use of L1 (Wang & Wen, 2002). Apart from its relation to writing performance, L2 proficiency also appeared to explain part of the difference in the use of strategies (Sasaki, 2000). Overall, it can be gathered that the level of L2 proficiency potentially determines L2 learners' writing performance and use of strategies.

In addition to L2 proficiency, writing strategy is also a frequently investigated factor in L2 writing process research. Process-oriented studies on L2 writing have shown that skilled and unskilled writers utilise a wide range of general and specific strategic actions to control and complete writing tasks (Bosher, 1998; Manchon, 2001; Sasaki, 2000; Uzawa & Cumming, 1989). Some studies suggest that skilled writers use different writing strategies and procedures from unskilled writers (Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1987; Roca de Larios, 2002). For example, during the pre-writing stage, skilled writers have been found to spend more time planning as they tend to change and revise their original plan whenever they come up with a new idea (Matsumoto, 1995). Matsumoto added that unskilled writers spend a shorter time planning, while skilled writers are more concerned with the development of points. Unskilled writers also pause more regularly to focus more attention to grammar errors and spelling. This in turn makes them lose flow of meaning throughout the text in the writing process (Matsumoto, 1995). However, data from some studies suggests that L2 writers are able to transfer their “L1 strategic repertoire” into L2 writing tasks (Cumming, 1989; Hirose & Sasaki, 1994; Pennington & So, 1993 cited in Manchon, 2001:49).

The general conclusion implied from these studies is that L2 writers’ strategy orientation differs according to L2 writing ability, proficiency level and L1 writing strategy. Most of these studies used qualitative methods such as think-aloud protocol or stimulated recall for data collection with small numbers of participants. Hence the results are hard to generalise. In an effort to achieve a more generalisable outcome, a quantitative approach will be used in this thesis. The use of questionnaire in writing strategy research has the potential to reach a large number of participants and thus conduct research on a bigger scale.

The third variable focused in this study is writing attitude which is measured through a writing apprehension questionnaire which measures writing attitude, writing apprehension and blocking behaviour. Writing apprehension is considered an affective response which impedes a student's ability to perform successfully in a writing task. The term was first coined by Daly and Miller (1975a) to describe the dysfunctional anxiety that many individuals go through when given a written task. Dally and Miller developed a standardized self-reporting instrument to measure writing apprehension and this has sparked a number of studies on the nature of writing apprehension. According to Cheng (2002), two effects of writing apprehension which have received much attention are distress related to writing and an intense dislike for the process. These factors are investigated in this study as they are seen as potential predictive variables of writing performance. As argued by Pajares and Johnson (1996), in academic settings, students' self-confidence helps determine what they do with the knowledge and skills they have. A study by Kear and Ellsworth (1995) also found that students who exhibit a positive attitude toward writing are more likely to write more often and expend more effort on writing tasks than their peers who exhibit negative attitude toward the same tasks. Despite its relative importance in L2 writing process and quality, very few researches were done in L2 writing (Gungle & Taylor, 1989). Hence the present work aims to provide insights on the role of these factors on writing performance among adult L2 students in an academic setting.

### **1.3 The focus of the study**

The general aim of the work presented in this study is to provide theoretical and pedagogical insights on the predictors of L2 writing among adult learners in the New Zealand and Malaysian settings. Although a number of L2 writing process studies have attempted to address these issues, most of them involved small number of samples which cannot be generalised across different context. Furthermore, L2 writing studies which compare research findings from two different cultural contexts are quite rare. Chan and Abdullah (2004) reported that a number of researches on writing in a second language context in countries other than the USA, Australia, Canada and the UK is scarce. The research reported in this thesis, therefore, focuses on quantitative measures of data collection to inform the development of L2 writing predictors in two different contexts. Initially, this thesis focused solely on writing strategies, L2 writing proficiency, writing attitude and L1 interference in L2 writing. This includes investigating the relationship between the variables and participants' writing performance. However, given the complex nature of L1 interference in L2 writing, the self-report data gathered from the initial studies could not provide adequate evidence of this occurrence. Hence the current work developed an additional measure to assess participants' writing product which aimed to detect errors related to L1 interference.

In the total of three studies reported in this thesis, the work focused on: (i) determining L2 proficiency level among tertiary level students in New Zealand and Malaysia (ii) assessing participants' L2 writing performance using an analytic rating scale known as the Jacobs (1981) (iii) assessing participants' level of writing apprehension using a writing strategy questionnaire (iv) the occurrence of writing errors using Systematic Analysis of Language Transcript conventions (SALT, Miller &



Chapman, 2001). This programme was originally used as an oral language analysis tool, so a number of novel codes were utilised to ensure that the variables measured reflected important features of students' writing in English as a second language. (v) the interplay between predictive factors of writing and their relation to writing performance (vi) the link between theoretical and pedagogical implications and how these can inform the development of L2 writing instruction.

The participants in this thesis were pre-degree students aged between 18-21 year olds. These levels were chosen as students at the tertiary level have gone through secondary schooling system and should possess Basic English writing skills. This was important as participants needed to write an argumentative essay task during data collection. In addition, it was also imperative that the individuals chosen in this study were able to make sound judgements regarding their self-perceived use of writing strategies. Since the students were considered adults, their selection was deemed appropriate for this study. Furthermore research studies involving higher education learners are relatively few (Che Musa *et al.*, 2012:39).

The three studies conducted as part of this thesis will be reported in the following chapters. Before presenting these studies, Chapter 2 outlines findings from studies reported in the realm of second language writing that are relevant to this thesis. In addition, it will cover some of the main theories developed with regard to L1 and L2 writing that form rationale to the current work. This chapter will also present background information about the history of English teaching in Malaysia, the teaching of writing in the ESL classroom and the main issues that emerge in L2 writing research to give the reader some background information on the context of the present work. Further information will be provided in the following chapters when related specifically

to the research aims. Nevertheless, the current chapter should provide enough information for the reader to follow the aims of and the rationale behind the work conducted. Therefore, this chapter will end by discussing the issues covered in each of the study chapters and describing how these issues will be addressed.

The first study will be reported and discussed in Chapter 3. This focused on determining the appropriate measures for investigating the predictive variables in writing performance; particularly learners' writing strategies, L2 proficiency and first language (L1) interference. A writing strategy questionnaire (Petric & Czarl, 2003) was used in this study to tap participants' self-perceived use of writing strategies. The questionnaire which consists of two sections, aimed to elicit information regarding participants' background and self-perceived writing strategies. Participants were instructed to complete the questionnaire in 40 minutes. The questionnaire data were collected in two parts, with N=10 intermediate level students taking an English proficiency course in Group 1 and N=13 intermediate students in Group 2. It is important to note here that Group 2 did not sit for any other tests in the study. After completing the questionnaire, participants in Group 1 performed a 30-minute receptive vocabulary test sourced from Nation (1993). The test contained 38 items which required participants to indicate whether each statement was True, Not True or Not Sure. In addition to the vocabulary test, Group 1 also did a colour naming task which consists of forty target stimuli. The measure required the participants to name all items appeared on an A4 paper as fast as they could, trying to avoid making errors. A stop watch was used to record the time taken by the participants to name all the items. The time duration was recorded in seconds, along with any naming errors. Finally, participants in Group 1 performed a timed-essay task which took 30 minutes to complete. Descriptive analysis

of participants' writing strategies (for Group 1 and 2) indicated that a majority of participants' planning strategies were limited to having a mental or written plan. At the drafting stage, over half of the respondents reported that they always start with an introduction and were more likely to stop drafting after a few sentences. Most respondents reread what's written to get ideas on how to continue their essay but they do not go back to their outline to make changes in it.

With regard to the use of L1, it was found that a majority of respondents do not write bits of text in their native language. However, quite a number of participants indicated that they would write in their L1 if they don't know a word in English. This suggests that students would only use their L1 as a last resort in writing. Overall, it was rather evident that participants were apprehensive about grammar and vocabulary in their writing. With regard to revising strategies, it was found that participants were more likely to make changes in vocabulary and sentence structure. However participants were less likely to make changes in essay structure or changes in content. This thesis interprets these findings as indicating that participants have a basic idea of how to write in English but they are more concerned about surface level changes and mistakes. An overall analysis of the essays for participants in Group 1 also indicated that there was not enough variation or breadth that could enable proper assessment of participants' essay using an analytic rating scale. This finding argues that the writing measure used to tap participants' writing performance need to be revised to allow for a more comprehensive output from participants. Based on these preliminary findings, an intricate revision process was done to improve the measures used in Study 1. This includes rewording and rephrasing ambiguous items, removing irrelevant items from the questionnaire and restructuring the writing task for the next study.

Hence Study 2, reported in Chapter 4, was performed with the primary aim to test the revised measures and answer the research aims set out in this thesis. The focus of Study 2 was on L2 writers' proficiency level, writing attitude, writing errors and writing strategies in an English-dominant setting. The function of these variables in writing performance was explored by measuring the correlations between writing attitude scores, errors in writing, strategy use and essay scores. Nine research questions were designed to guide the study framework and gather specific data regarding the research aims. Study 2 used an improved version of the Writing Strategy Questionnaire. Section 1 of the questionnaire consists of 6 items eliciting information regarding participants' demographic profile and interest in writing, while Section 2 consists of 36 items that cover writing strategies. Participants were asked to complete the questionnaire in 40 minutes.

The second measure used in Study 2 was a set of three vocabulary level test (VLT). Nation's (1999) receptive vocabulary tests were used to indicate students' level of L2 proficiency. The receptive vocabulary test was chosen as it has been said that receptive knowledge precedes productive knowledge and use of vocabulary (Meara; 1996; Laufer 1988). Each vocabulary test consisted of 10 questions and each question tested 3 different target words (see Chapter 3 for a more elaborate description of the questionnaire) presented in a booklet. Participants recorded all their answers on the booklet for easy scoring. Participants' writing performance was based on scores gathered in a timed-essay writing task. Findings from Study 2 indicated that L2 proficiency; particularly vocabulary size was related to writing performance. In addition, the results also pointed out that certain writing strategies which may be effective for certain groups of L2 writers might not be as effective for others, due to

differences in L2 proficiency. For example, it was discovered that L2 writers who performed poorly were prone to performing writing strategies related to surface level checking during text production. In other words, these writers revising strategies were limited to checking spelling mistakes, punctuation and surface grammar mistakes. Following these discoveries, it was concluded that a lower level of L2 proficiency was related to lower writing performance and the employment of unsophisticated writing strategies.

Chapter 5 presents the third and final study that formed the new study carried out as part of this thesis. Study 3 focused on Malaysian ESL learners studying at tertiary level education. The data were collected from 109 students who came from three different programme levels which were labelled as Group A, B and C. Group A which consisted of 39 participants, represented the group that had the least amount of academic experience in tertiary level education. Group B which consisted of 30 participants studying in their second semester course programme represented the group which had an average amount of academic experience in tertiary level education. Group C which consisted of 40 participants had the most amount of academic experience in tertiary level education. The chapter starts with a brief overview of the study and research questions. The work involved an assessment of L2 proficiency level, writing strategies, writing performance and analysis of writing errors among three different sample groups which had different level of academic experience. The aim was to discern the differences between these groups in writing attitude scores, errors in writing, strategy use and essay scores and to determine whether the groups' orientation of these factors was related to writing performance. All groups were instructed to answer a

writing strategy questionnaire and three vocabulary tests. Additionally, they were given a timed-essay task which took approximately sixty-minutes to complete.

Analysis of the data yielded revealing results, indicating that Group A was the weakest among the three groups. Group A achieved the lowest vocabulary test scores and essay scores than the other two groups. Overall, these findings indicate that Group A had the least amount of L2 proficiency and was significantly different from Group B and C. However the latter two groups were of a similar level. In terms of relationship between writing strategies and writing performance, data from this work suggests that pre writing strategies such as *note down words related to a topic* and *plan in each paragraph* are important for beginning ESL learners especially at the initial level of writing instructions. Positive relationship was found between a number of pre-writing strategies and writing performance for Group A. This seems to suggest that the better writers in the group were the ones who applied some form of pre-writing strategies. Meanwhile, drafting strategies which correlated negatively with writing performance for Group B were *write bits of text in L1, focus on grammar and vocabulary, stop to reread after each sentence, focus on spelling* and *use a bilingual dictionary*. This implies that the weaker writers in the group relied more on L1, bilingual dictionary and were more concerned with grammar and vocabulary. For Group C, drafting strategies which appeared ineffective were *going back to outline to get ideas* and *stop to write to look up a word in a dictionary*.

With regard to revising strategies, findings in this thesis revealed that the strategies *read text aloud, check mistakes and try to learn from them* and *focus more on the points presented in my essay* showed the potential of being positive strategies for Group A. For Group B, more positive revising strategies appeared to be *focus on one*

*aspect at a time, check mistakes and try to learn from them and focus on the spelling and grammar of my essay.* It seems that the strategy *check mistakes and try to learn from them* was effective for both Group A and B. However, this particular strategy correlated negatively with writing performance for participants in Group C. It is concluded that the inconsistency regarding the relationship between writing strategies and writing performance across three groups may be attributed to the different proficiency levels and the ways in which writing instructions were taught to them.

Data from Study 3 also yielded significant findings, indicating that a higher level of L2 proficiency was related to better performance in writing. This was common across all three groups. This finding supports previous research (Aliakbari, 2002; Kiany & Nejad, 2001; Cumming, 1989 in Leki et. al, 2008) into this area which links L2 proficiency and L2 writing performance. In addition to that, findings from Study 3 also suggest that L2 proficiency may play a part in the use of effective writing strategies for L2 learners. Findings from the study imply that certain revising strategies were more effective among participants in Group B compared to the other two groups in this study. This thesis argues that participants in Group B whose level of L2 proficiency is higher than the other two groups were more capable of performing lexical evaluation on their own essays. This finding is in agreement with Sasaki's (2000) which reported that L2 proficiency or lack of it appears to explain part of the difference in strategy use between the experts and the novice writers. Based on these findings, this thesis suggests that a thorough and informed training of writing strategies be integrated in the L2 writing classroom, especially at the early stages of writing instructions. Writing tutors should observe what strategies learners already possess, and then prepare lessons that include a range of successful writing strategies that they should be aware of.

Another interesting finding discovered in Study 3 was the relationship between errors and writing performance. Errors that were found to be negatively correlated with writing performance were spelling, subject-verb agreement, tenses, word error and sentence error. Overall, subject verb agreement error appeared to be a common factor that impacts writing performance for all three groups, whereas word error was a common factor for Group B and C. The overall negative correlations between errors and writing performance suggest that as errors increased, writing performance decreased. In addition, errors were also significantly correlated with L2 proficiency, suggesting that as L2 proficiency increased, errors decreased. This finding argues for the relevance of developing and enhancing learners' L2 proficiency to reduce errors and subsequently increase writing performance.

Chapter 6, which consists of the final general discussion provides an overview of the findings from the studies as well as discussion of the implications of these on ESL writing instructions. It highlights the limitations of the study and proposes suggestions for future research. The general conclusion is that the findings reported from these studies were consistent with findings in the literature. Although some of the measures used in the literature were different from the ones used in this study, the evidence suggests that the predictive variables of writing performance were common across different studies. These findings should support the appropriate intervention programmes in ESL classrooms and inform our theoretical understanding of L2 writing process.



## CHAPTER TWO

### REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE

#### 2.1 Writing in a second language

From an academic perspective, L2 writing can be viewed as “a product constructed from the writer’s command of grammatical and lexical knowledge, and writing development is considered to be the result of imitating and manipulating models provided by the teacher” Hyland (2003:3). Although Hyland’s perspective on L2 writing seems straightforward, the actual process involved in L2 text construction is actually very complex. Writing in L2 is comparatively more challenging than writing in L1 as writers’ linguistic knowledge and writing strategies in the second language are less well-developed. As Rogers (2003) argues, L2 writers possess different linguistic knowledge base than L1 writers. Compared to L2 writers, L1 writers possess larger vocabulary size and an instinctive ability to deal with the grammar of the language. L2 writers on the other hand need to go through the process of learning to write and learning English simultaneously.

Apart from linguistic ability, meta-cognitive knowledge, particularly the ability to use appropriate writing strategies, is also crucial in developing L2 writing skills. Victori (1992) describes meta-cognitive knowledge in writing based on 3 areas which include the self-perceived knowledge about one’s own cognitive processor, task knowledge and strategy knowledge. Having meta-cognitive ability in writing means that the writer knows how to select and use particular writing strategies in a given task. It is

believed that the combination of linguistic knowledge and writing strategy is what determines the writing performance of L2 writers in the academic setting. These two variables are theoretically and practically related to guiding the present study and will be discussed extensively in this chapter. Other areas of concern in this thesis include writing attitude and error analysis. All these factors provide viewpoints and conceptual boundaries to guide and potentially describe the individual factors of L2 writing performance.

## **2.2 Theories of L2 Writing**

Research on L2 writing has only flourished since the early 1980s and up until the 1960s, studies in second language writing was scarce (Nelson, 2002). Due to the newness of L2 writing, most of the research in the literature depended on L1 writing theories and approach as guidelines. In this section, a review of writing models in L1 and L2, which have influenced research in L2 writing will be presented. These frameworks are relevant to this thesis and are used as the underlying rationale in explaining the predictors of L2 writing.

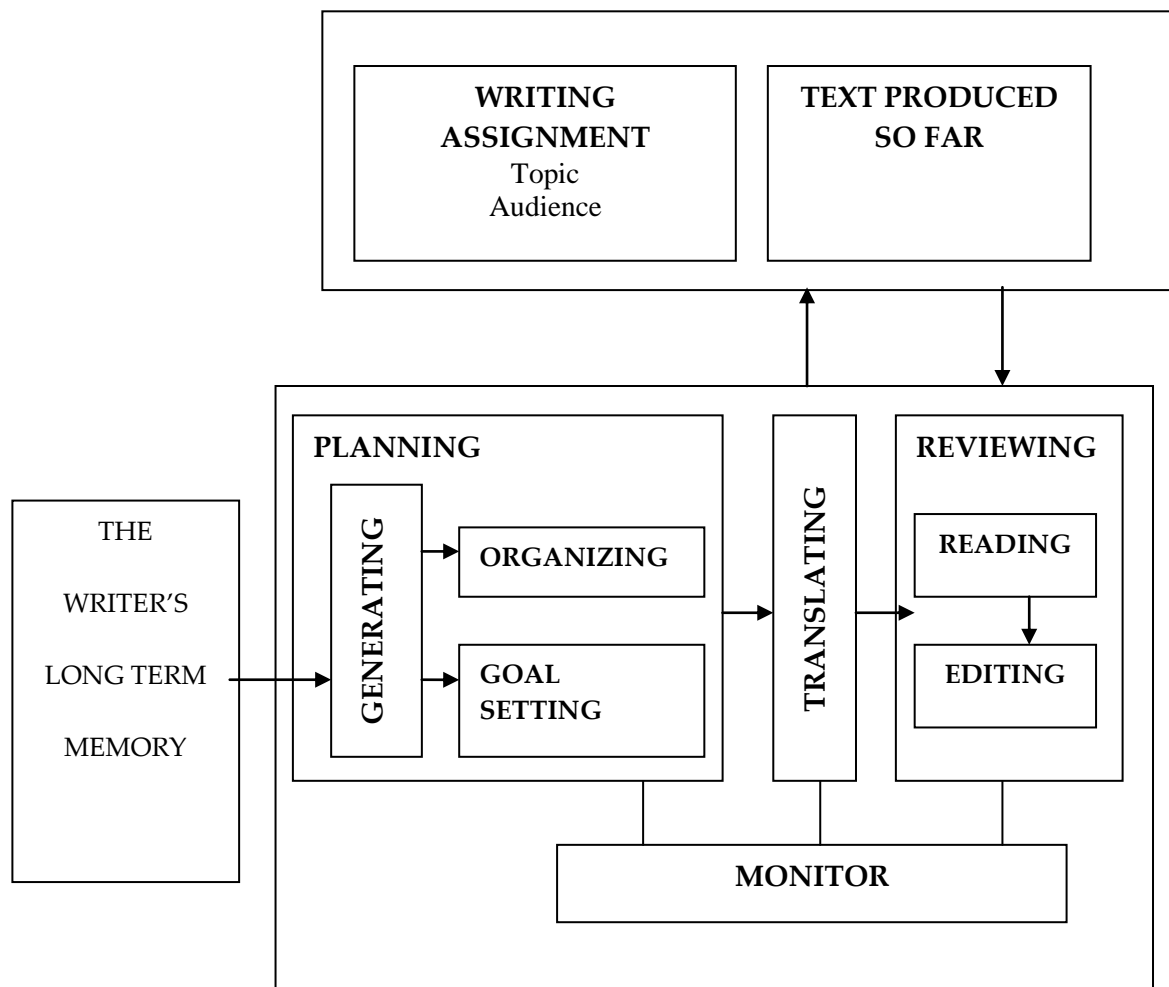
### **2.2.1 *Flower and Hayes (1980)***

One of the most influential L1 models most frequently referred to in L2 writing literature is the Process Model by Flower and Hayes (1980). This model has been used to examine the steps and thought processes that L1 writers engaged in when completing a written task. Flower and Hayes hoped that from this discovery, writing researchers could then find out the most effective ways and strategies to teach beginner writers

(Horning and Becker, 2006). Flower and Hayes cognitive model is divided into three main parts: the writing process, the task environment and the writer's long-term memory (see Figure 1). The writing process consists of three basic processes which are planning, translating and reviewing. The task environment consists of the writing assignment and the text written so far, while the writer's long-term memory comprises topical knowledge, audience awareness, grammar knowledge and writing plans. The three main parts of this model are highly interactive as the writing process operates based on the two mental resources. For example, during the writing process, particularly at the planning stage, the writer comes up with ideas and sets a writing plan by drawing information from the long term memory and the task environment. During the translating process, the writer transforms the linguistic input into written text, while in the reviewing process, the writer edits and tries to improve the text by drawing information about grammar knowledge from the long term memory. According to Flower and Hayes, the process of planning, translating and revising can happen at any moment during writing.

Flower and Hayes' model also suggests that the execution of these interactive processes is monitored by the monitor, which controls the writing processes such as deciding what content is appropriate, what content to revise and when it should be revised. The way in which these basic processes are combined and executed varies according to the writer's knowledge of the writing process, which is stored in the long term memory. This element of the model enabled researchers to differentiate between novice and expert writers (Flower and Hayes, 1986) which provided them with a framework of the composing process. This development created an impact in the direction of composition studies. As Silva (1989) reported, a major rise in empirical

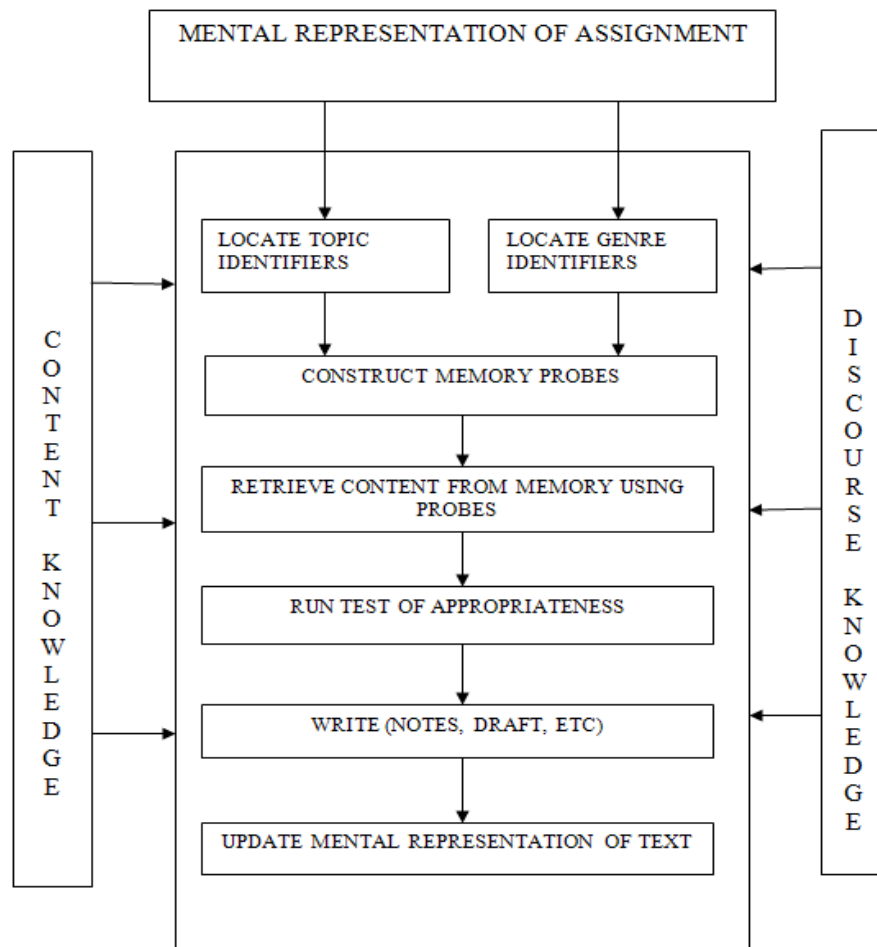
research on the composing processes of ESL writers was observed in the 1980s, which was right after Flower and Hayes model was developed. Additionally most L2 composition studies (e.g., Chenowith & Hayes, 2003; Sasaki & Hirose, 1996; Wan & Wen, 2003; Zamel, 1983) were guided by the writing process model.



**Figure 1.** Flower-Hayes (1980) writing model

### **2.2.2 *Bereiter and Scardamalia (1987)***

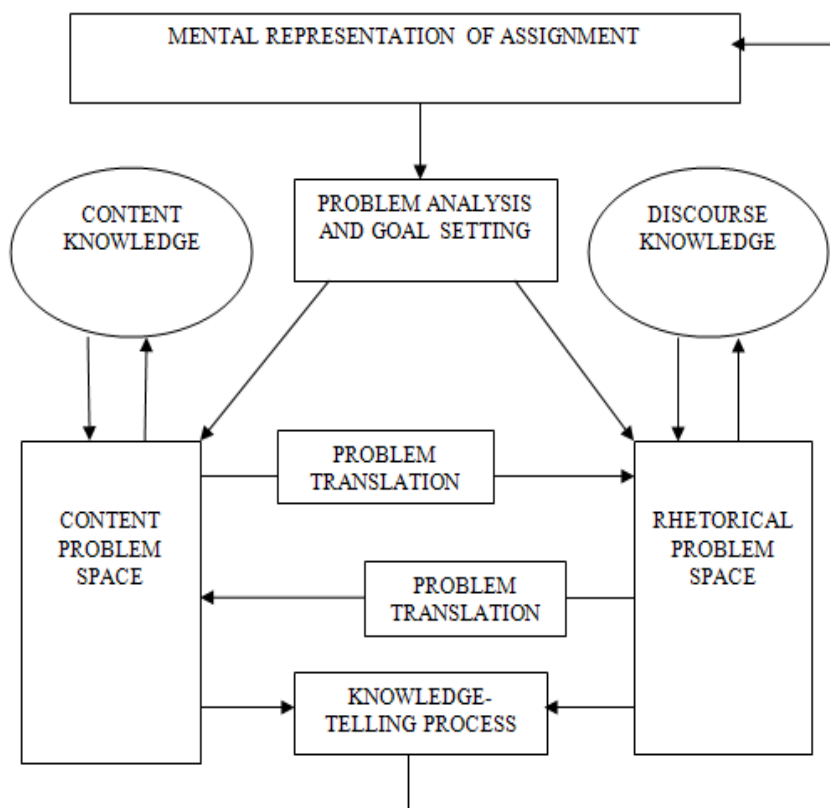
The second influential study which is in line with Flower and Hayes' cognitive psychology perspective was that of Bereiter and Scardamalia (1987). In this study, two models of composing were developed; the knowledge telling model, which is used to describe the naturally acquired ability in writing and the knowledge transforming model, which is used to describe the studied ability and skills that not everyone acquired (Bereiter and Scardamalia, 1987). This model describes the reasons for the distinctions in writing ability between expert and novice writers by portraying the writing behaviour of both types of writers during the writing process. According to this model, novice writers employ a knowledge-telling strategy which involves the processes of retrieving content from memory in relation to topical and genre cues given in a writing task (see Figure 2). In other words, novice writers retrieve information and produce text by thinking about the topic, reflecting on what they know, considering the genre of the task and finally search for the appropriate forms of writing. As Bereiter and Scardamalia (1987) argued, the knowledge telling model resembles a straightforward structure of basic speech production which does not involve a great deal of preparation. Bereiter and Scardamalia (1987) also added that the writers in this model are incapable of employing more complex writing strategies which involve extensive planning, efficient retrieval of information and major revisions.



**Figure 2.** Structure of the knowledge telling model (Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1987)

In contrast to the knowledge-telling model, the knowledge-transforming model describes the writing behaviour of skilled writers which involves the employment of a knowledge-transforming strategy during writing (see Figure 3). It is believed that skilled writers employ this knowledge-transforming strategy by creating a mental representation of task which later leads to the development of a series of problem solving analysis and goal setting. Galbraith (2009) reviewed that the goals derived from the problem analysis guide the generation and evaluation of content during writing. Therefore, as this model suggests, expert writers are more able to reflect on their writing

and employ more sophisticated strategies in writing. Galbraith (2009) also argues that expert writers develop more detailed plans, modify and elaborate plans more thoroughly and revise their initial drafts more comprehensively. Overall, Bereiter and Scardamalia's distinction between the writing processes and strategies of skilled and unskilled writers suggest that less-skilled writers actually go through less polished version of skilled writers' process. According to Myles (2002), the latter model is crucial in writing because it opens the idea of multiple processing, which is revealed through writing tasks that differ in processing complexity.

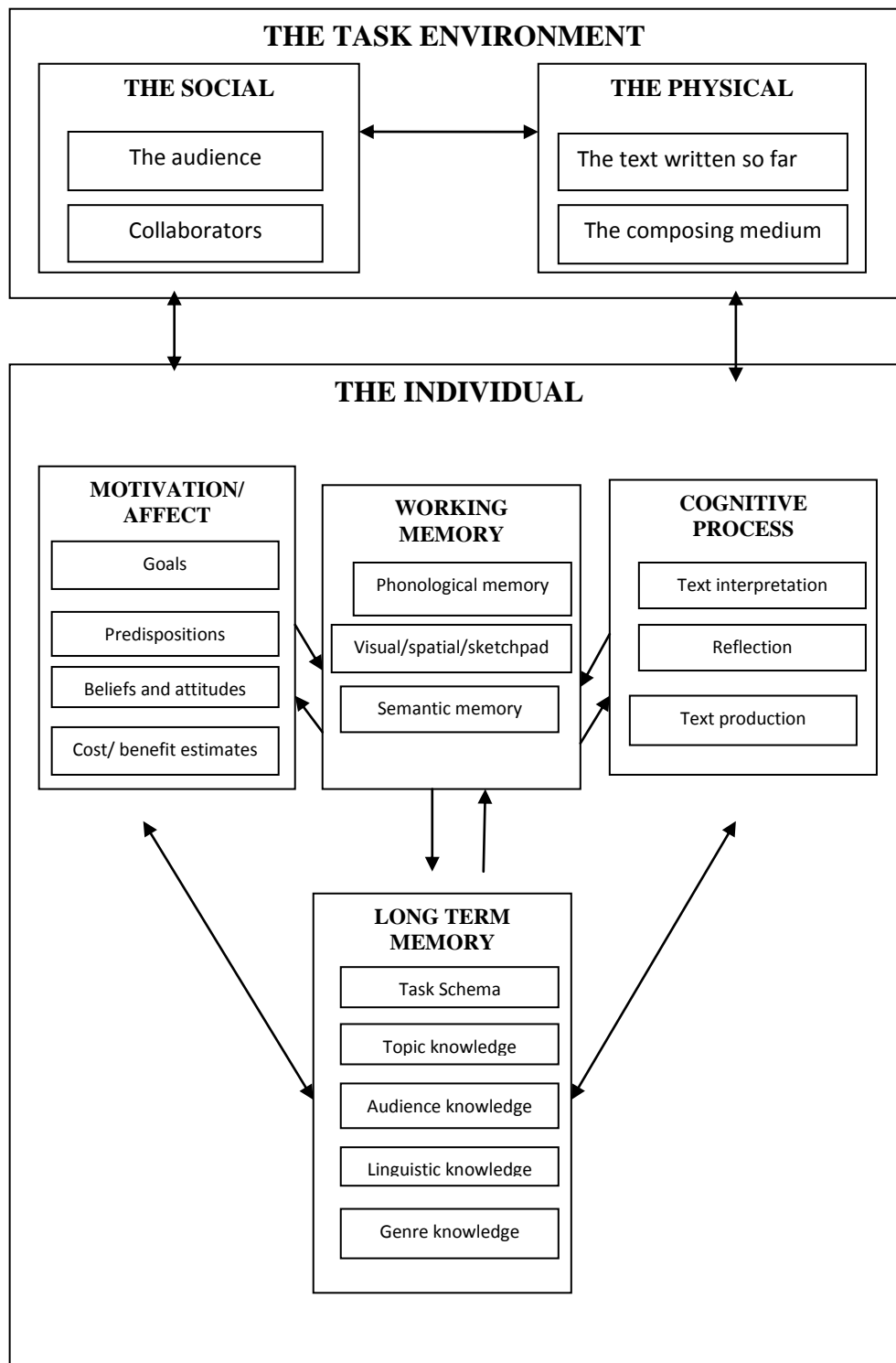


**Figure 3.** Structure of the knowledge transforming model (Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1987)

### 2.2.3 *Hayes (1996)*

In 1996, Hayes proposed a new model of writing, which was an extension of the 1980 model. Hayes (1996) claimed that the revised model “can provide a better description of current empirical findings than the 1980 model” (p.1). Unlike the old version which consists of three components, the revised model consists of two major components: the individual and the task environment. The individual component consists of the writer’s long term memory, cognitive process, working memory and motivation or affect. The task environment consists of the social environment, which describes the audience and collaborators, and the physical environment, which describes the text written so far and the composing medium. The task environment described in this model differs from the old one as it includes social environment as one of the elements in the environment. Similar to the old model, the writer’s long term memory consists of topical knowledge, genre knowledge and linguistic knowledge. The cognitive process in this model replaces writing process in the previous model which includes text interpretation, reflection and production. Working memory and motivation or affect are new elements in the revised model. Working memory includes phonological memory, spatial and semantic memory. Motivation and/or affect comprise goals, predispositions, beliefs, attitudes, apprehension and cost or benefit estimates. These affective factors are seen as personal elements which can influence the learner’s orientation towards writing. This aspect of the model relates to the present work as writing apprehension is one of the investigated factors in L2 writing.





**Figure 4.** Cognitive Model of text production (Hayes, 1996)

#### **2.2.4 Cummins' Threshold Hypothesis**

Cummins' threshold hypothesis describes the relationship between bilingualism and cognition. Cummins (1979:229) reported that under certain circumstances, features of bilingualism in early childhood can accelerate cognitive growth. However, these features will only come into effect when the learner has attained a minimum threshold level of L2 competency. In describing the effects of L1 and L2 competency on cognition, Cummins differentiates 3 types of bilingual learners which are labelled as partial bilinguals, dominant bilinguals and balanced bilinguals. Partial bilinguals are used to describe learners who possess low levels of L1 and L2 proficiency and whose interaction with their educational environment is weak. Due to this, they experience academic disadvantages in school. Dominant bilinguals who possess sufficient competency in one of their languages do not experience academic disadvantage. Meanwhile, balanced bilinguals who are proficient in both languages are the ones that would experience cognitive and academic advantages related to bilingualism. In practical terms, this suggests that learners who are competent in L1 and L2, would experience positive cognitive advantages of being bilingual, whereas learners who are competent in only L1 would experience neither positive nor negative effects. The hypothesis also maintains the notion that individuals with high level of proficiency in both languages experience cognitive advantages in terms of linguistic flexibility while low level of proficiency in both languages results in cognitive disadvantages. Cummins theory is supported by a substantial number of studies which claim that bilingualism can positively influence academic and cognitive functioning. In the context of second language acquisition and literacy, this view suggests that a certain level of second language literacy must first be attained before first language literacy skills can be

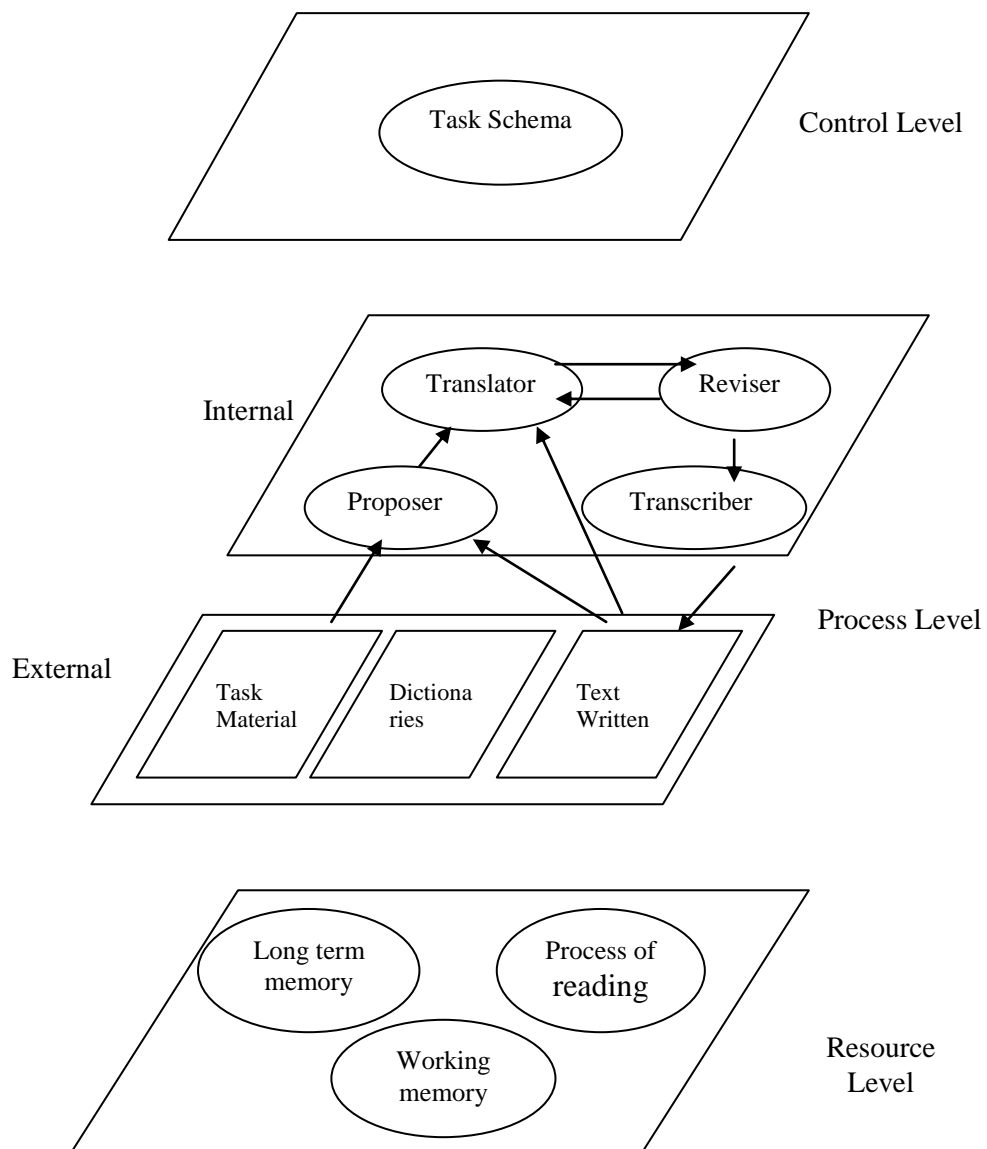
transmitted successfully. As posited by Cummins (1979), the learner's level of linguistic proficiency operate as a mediator in the development of cognitive and literacy skills. If a learner only attains a very low level of L2 proficiency in the second language, interaction with the environment through that language, both in terms of input and output, is likely to be diminished (Cummins, 1979:230). This implies that the threshold hypothesis can be used to describe the relationship between L2 learners' level of L2 proficiency and their cognitive and academic development.

### **2.3 Chenowith and Hayes (2001) model of text production and the current work**

A more recent model which describes the process of text production is the one developed by Chenowith and Hayes (2001). The model (see Figure 5) consists of three parts: the resource level, the process level and the control level. The resource level encompasses linguistic and general knowledge that processes at the other levels can retrieve during text production. For example, the proposer may draw upon information in the long term memory to come up with points for a narrative essay. The translator then calls on long term memory for lexicographic and grammatical rules. Finally, the transcriber may call on long term memory for orthographic rules of the language.

The next component in the model is the process level. This level represents L2 writers' mental activities during the composing process. The composing processes include two factors; internal processes and the external environment of those processes. Four components, namely the proposer, translator, reviser and transcriber, constitute the internal processes and each plays a different role in the composing process. The proposer is responsible for developing points or what Galbraith (2009:15) calls, "an idea

package” which is transmitted to the translator. The translator produces strings of words with proper word order which is then sent to the reviser. The reviser’s role is to assess the language string and decide whether or not it is suitable. If it is deemed suitable, the transcriber turns the content into text. If it is not acceptable, then the proposer or translator can try to come up with a revised version.



**Figure 5.** Chenoweth & Hayes (2001) model of text production

The control level comprises a task schema which contains the task objective and a set of productions that control the interactions among the processes (Chenowith and Hayes, 2001). At this point, meta-cognitive knowledge such as writing strategies may be called upon. As this model suggests, the decision as to what strategies to use would not be common for all writers or type of tasks as it is chosen based on the writer's own knowledge. For example, when given a difficult writing task, less proficient L2 writers may opt to depend primarily on their L1 to come up with points to produce texts. In contrast, proficient L2 writers may opt to use less of L1 and more of L2 when generating points and producing texts.

In most L2 writing tasks, it is assumed that sentence generation starts with idea generation performed by the proposer. Based on the task requirements, the proposer generates prelinguistic ideas related to the task before sending it to the translator. After receiving the prelinguistic ideas, the translator processes and transforms the input into an articulatory buffer. The reviser then makes an assessment and determines whether it is acceptable. If it is considered appropriate, then the transcriber will include it to the text written so far. If it is considered inappropriate, the proposer or translator may repeat the process and try to produce a better version. According to Chenowith and Hayes (2001), the relationships between these processes are not unidirectional and that each process is led by the next process in sequence. For instance, a proposer may come up with a series of ideas for a written task. Some of these ideas are linguistically easier to translate than others. Logically, a writer will opt for ideas that are easier to translate instead of those that are difficult to translate. Hence the input that is selected in text

production may rely on both the proposer and the translator, which is inherently influenced by the linguistic knowledge stored in the resource level.

As a whole, this interactive model suggests that text production involves the interplay between components in the process level and sources in the resource level such as linguistic proficiency, general knowledge and process of reading. These interactions are administered by the task schema which determines what kind of writing process and strategies to activate based on a given task.

#### **2.4 The role of L2 proficiency in writing performance**

In second language acquisition research, the term ‘language proficiency’ can be defined in a number of ways. The term can be used as an overall indicator to describe L2 learners’ general abilities in the target language. At the same time, it may also be used to “refer to specific aspects of linguistic competence, such as phonological, syntactic, morphological, lexical and/or discourse skills” (Unsworth, 2005:153). In a broad perspective, language proficiency is divided into knowledge and some aspects of communicative competence and it often contains one or more of the following dichotomies: Productive vs. Receptive, Written vs. Oral, Communicative vs. Grammatical, etc.

Second language proficiency has been extensively examined in L2 writing studies. Despite differing research aims in these studies, the role of L2 proficiency in L2 writing ability or performance has often been a major issue. At one end of the spectrum, the literature suggests that L2 proficiency plays a major role in L2 writing quality or performance. At the other end of the spectrum, L2 proficiency is not considered as a significant predictor of writing quality or performance. Nonetheless, many studies have

indicated that L2 proficiency indeed plays a significant role in the success of second language writing. Cumming (1989) found that when a writer's L2 proficiency increases, he/ she is more capable of producing effective texts. It was reported in his study that participants who possessed higher L1 writing ability generated better quality texts in L2 compared to participants with lower L1 writing ability. Therefore, if L2 writers increase their L2 proficiency, such as their vocabulary size, then the transfer of skills from L1 to L2 will be more likely. In the same vein, Schoonen *et al.* (2003) discovered that the correlation between speed of processing in L2 and L2 writing proficiency were higher than the correlation speed of processing in L1 and L1 writing proficiency. Hence, L2 writing seems to be more dependent on L2 linguistic knowledge and speed of processing than is L1 writing (Schoonen *et al.*, 2003). In line with these findings, Sasaki and Hirose (1996) reported that L2 proficiency is considered as an explanatory variable that affects writing ability in terms of writing fluency. As reported in their study (Sasaki and Hirose, 1996), L2 proficiency has a higher impact in L2 writing performance compared to L1 writing ability. In addition, Yun (2005) also reported in her study that L2 proficiency was a good predictor of L2 writing performance and that a threshold level of L2 proficiency is necessary in order for skills to be transferred to L2 writing performance. Pennington and So (1993) also reported that learners' L2 proficiency was a major factor in determining their L2 writing quality. Sasaki (2000) further emphasises the role of L2 proficiency by stating that the lack of L2 proficiency can be accounted for the differences in the use of strategy between the expert and novice writers. It was revealed in her study that novices often paused to translate their ideas into English whereas the experts paused to refine their English expression. Therefore it was concluded that low L2 proficiency constrained L2 learners writing speed and fluency.

Aside from the impact on L2 writing performance, L2 proficiency has also been linked to the use of L1 in the composing process. The effect of L2 proficiency on L1 use has been reported in a number of studies (see Jones & Tetroe, 1987; Sasaki 2002; 2004; Sasaki & Hirose, 1996; Wang & Wen, 2002; Wolfersberger, 2003; Woodall, 2002). Jones and Tetroe (1987) who investigated L1 and L2 composing processes of Spanish-speaking learners found that lack of L2 vocabulary led to the increased use of L1 in composing process. This finding is also shared by Sasaki & Hirose (1996) who reported that the good writers in their study had the tendency to do less mental translation from their L1 to L2. This in turn led to the good writers producing higher quantity of text in L2. In another study by Sasaki (2000) it was reported that low-proficient writers had the tendency to pause to translate their ideas into English. On the other hand, Cumming's (1989) study on the thinking processes of 14 adult Anglophones students found that the learners in his study summarized texts in L2 using similar thinking processes in their L1.

According to Van Weijen *et al.* (2008) when L2 writers are overwhelmed by cognitive challenges while writing in L2, they will switch to L1 to accommodate the writing task and this results in a decrease in text quality. This means that writers who possess higher L2 proficiency are less likely to use L1 while writing in L2 than weaker writers. Van Weijen *et al.* (2008) also reported that when writers with higher L2 proficiency use L1 while writing, the quality of the written product will be reduced. In line with this finding, Wang (2003) reported that language switching was more frequent for expert writers than for novice writers. Indeed, the studies done on the relationship between L2 proficiency and L1 use have raised a lot of enquiries regarding the underlying theory behind the impact of L1 use and L2 proficiency in the writing



process. Therefore, it is the aim of this study to shed some light on these enquiries and inform the literature of L2 writing.

#### ***2.4.1 Vocabulary as a measure of L2 proficiency***

Vocabulary knowledge can be measured through one's ability to comprehend, acquire, retrieve and recall vocabulary items. Schmitt, Schmitt & Clapham (2001:55) define vocabulary as "the building block of language" and claim that it is the "single most important area of second language competence" in relation to academic success (Saville-Troike, 1984:199, cited in Leki & Carson 1994). Additionally, L2 vocabulary has also been regarded as one of the best single predictors of L2 proficiency (Laufer & Goldstein 2004). Due to its importance in second language learning, lexical knowledge is often regarded as the foundation in acquiring the four skills in English. As Nation (2001) argues, sufficient lexical knowledge is important in language learning as vocabulary knowledge determines the extent of learners' language literacy and helps them to learn the target language. Indeed, the relationship between vocabulary knowledge and academic success highlights the role of lexical knowledge as an academic predictor (Engber, 1995; Laufer & Nation, 1995). Given the importance of lexical knowledge in literacy development and academic success, an extensive amount of research has been done on the predictive role of vocabulary in second language learning. Of particular concern to this thesis is the study of the role of vocabulary knowledge in second language writing performance.

Vocabulary size has been found to play a key role in writing performance. There have been many studies in the literature which investigated the correlation between lexical richness and writing quality (Engber, 1995; Llach & Gallego, 2009; Nation

2001). As reported by Engber (1995), the competent retrieval of vocabulary is crucial in timed-essay tasks. In his study, Engber used four lexical richness measures to assess lexical proficiency. These measures were then correlated with six placement essays written by L2 students from mixed background. The findings suggested that the diversity of lexical choice and the correctness of lexical form have a significant effect on the readers. In other words, the readers are more prone to awarding higher marks to students who have good lexical choices. In another study, Laufer and Nation (1995) used Nation's Vocabulary Profile to produce a Lexical Proficiency Profile (LFP) of student compositions. The aim of the study was to determine to what extent the profile would correlate with students' scores on the PVL. It was revealed that students who had larger vocabulary size used fewer high frequency words than students with smaller vocabulary size.

In a different study, Astica (1993) used a scoring technique which was similar to the ESL Composition Profile to score 210 writing samples. A regression analysis showed that 84% of the variance could be accounted for by vocabulary. Beglar (1999) on the other hand conducted a study by correlating vocabulary scores and scores of the TOEFL Structure and Written Expression subsection. His study revealed that the Written Expression subsection correlated highly with scores in the Vocabulary Level Test (VLT) and University Word Level (UWL). In addition, Linnarud (1986) who analysed writing samples produced by first and second language users of Swedish discovered that the compositions were correlated in terms of the number of words for each composition, number of words per sentence, lexical individuality and lexical sophistication. From the analysis, Linnarud concluded that vocabulary size was the single largest factor in writing quality.

The studies reviewed have shown that students' vocabulary tests can be a good predictor of writing performance. As Grabe (1991) and Frederiksen (1982) have stated, vocabulary knowledge is considered by both first-language and second-language researchers to be of great significance in language competence.

## **2.5 Second language writing strategies**

Research into writing strategies has not been thoroughly explored compared to other areas in the realm of second language writing. As Petric and Czarl (2003) stated, second language writing strategy research is considered a latecomer in the field. One of the reasons for this is because second language research was strongly guided by L1 writing theories whose purpose is to identify monolingual writers' performance. Most studies in this line used the term "writing process" instead of "writing strategies" although both terms are sometimes used to refer to the same thing.

A number of studies on learners' composing process were devoted on investigating the specific skills and strategies employed by skilled and unskilled writers in an academic setting. The aim was to examine what strategies writers use as they write and which strategies lead the writers to be considered successful or unsuccessful (Weaver & Padron, 1992). Although most of the early studies focused on L1 writers, the findings from the literature have guided L2 writing researchers into examining strategy use in L2 writing. Similar to L1 composing process research, most L2 writing strategy studies use different instruments such as interviews, questionnaires, direct and audio-tape observations, composing-aloud protocol and texts produced by the participants (Petric & Czarl, 2003). Text analysis, observation and text production reveal what

writers do when they write while questionnaires probe self-reported data to provide information on writers' own perception of their writing strategies.

Based on an overview of studies conducted by Krapels (1990), it was discovered that there were more discrepancies in the use of strategies among writers than between L1 and L2 writing strategies of the same writers. Silva (1993) also noted that in spite of the basic similarity between L1 and L2 writing strategies, L2 writing involves less planning and reviewing. Differences in L2 writers' processes are noted in the areas of approaching a writing task, prewriting, planning processes and in the ability to use flexible large scale plans. Although these are common to L1 writing, differences occur in the sub-processes within each stage, with L2 writers demonstrating a different pattern in carrying out the activities. For example, in terms of planning, Silva (1993) reported that L2 writers did less planning at the global and local levels compared to that expected of L1 writing. They focused more attention to generating materials for the writing task and even then, this generation was less successful than in L1 writing as more time was spent on figuring out the topic. A recent study by Sasaki (2004) which investigated writing strategies of Japanese EFL writers found that expert writers spend a longer amount of time on global plan before writing while the novice writers spent a shorter amount of time on global plan. Due to a longer time spent on planning, the expert writers did not stop and think as frequently as the novice writers. As a whole, unskilled L2 writers' planning strategies were less effective than skilled writers.

In terms of revising strategies, L2 writing reportedly involved less reviewing than L1 writing (Silva, 1990) and that most of L2 revision seemed to be focused on grammar and spelling rather than content (Hall, 1990; Skibniewski, 1988 cited in Silva 1993). In general, skilled writers have been found to spend more time planning and

revising their text than unskilled writers. More specifically, skilled L2 writers pay more attention to content, organization and choice of words. They also engage in global editing, such as editing the content and organization of the whole essay rather than making surface level changes. Production in L2 has been found to be more laborious, less fluent and less productive than in L1 (Silva, 1993). This is because L2 writers spent a disproportionate amount of time referring back to the writing prompts and looking up words in a dictionary. Other findings also reported that compared to L1 writing, pauses in L2 writing were more frequent, longer and consumed more time (Hall, 1990; Hildenbrand, 1985; Skibniewski and Skibniewska, 1986 cited in Silva, 1993).

One of the reasons why L2 writers portray different patterns in the composing process may be due to lack of practice in writing. As argued by Uzawa (1996), L2 writers who do not have sufficient experience in writing cannot write as they might wish. In his study involving 22 ESL writers, it was found that the participants had knowledge of composition and were familiar with the terms like brainstorming, outlining, thesis statement, topic sentence and introduction-body-conclusion. However, Uzawa discovered that the writers were not able to transform their ideas using these concepts. As Uzawa pointed out, the participants may have “declarative knowledge” about composition, or known facts about writing strategies but they lacked “procedural knowledge” or knowledge how to perform a particular writing task. Another possible reason for the discrepancies is that skilled writers possess highly developed schemata than less skilled writers (Weigle, 2005; Roca de Larios *et al.*, 2002). This could either be the writer’s content schemata or language schemata which enable them to produce text more efficiently. As Sasaki (2004) argued in her study, L2 proficiency which falls

under the category of language schemata, explained part of the difference in strategy use between the expert and novice writers.

## **2.6 Writing Attitude**

Another factor that may explain the variation in L2 writing performance is motivation or affect. Affective factors can be defined as emotional elements that may influence learning, either in a negative or positive way. Among the affective factors investigated in L2 writing studies are attitude towards writing, writing apprehension, writing block and writing self-efficacy. According to Mantle-Bromley (1995) attitude “refers to affect and is an evaluative emotional reaction” (p.173). In L2 writing studies, the term writing attitude has often been acknowledged as having an effect on learners’ writing processes, writing strategies and writing performance. It is believed that writers who have negative attitude towards writing have high writing apprehension and may develop blocking behaviours during the composing process. The term writing apprehension (WA) refers to an individual’s predisposition to carry out or to avoid writing tasks (Masny and Foxall, 1992). It was first coined by Daly and Miller (1975a) who developed an instrument called the Writing Apprehension Test (WAT) to measure students’ level of apprehension when writing in their L1. Daly and Miller (1975a) claimed that students with high writing apprehension levels and negative attitude are not keen into taking an advanced course in writing and tend to select college majors that have low writing demand. Findings from the literature (see Gungle and Taylor, 1989; Petric, 2002; Al-Ahmad, 2003) indicated that the number of studies on writing attitude and writing apprehension in L2 is quite scarce compared to the amount of studies done in L1. Nevertheless, several studies done in L2 writing have confirmed the findings of

L1 writing studies which suggest that writing attitude is related to L2 learners' writing quality and quantity. For instance, the findings of Kear & Ellsworth (1995) indicated that students who exhibit a positive attitude towards writing are more likely to write more often and expend more effort on writing tasks than their peers who exhibit a negative attitude towards the same tasks. In another study, Graham *et al.* (2007) reported that students with more positive attitudes had greater writing achievement than their peers with less favourable attitudes towards writing.

Few studies have also reported that writing apprehension which is a component of writing attitude does affect the learners' writing process. Wynn (1998) who investigated the effects of collaborative learning on learners' attitude and writing quality discovered that learners with positive attitude viewed writing as enjoyable. In contrast, learners with negative attitudes have been found to dislike writing activities and are more apprehensive about the writing process. This finding is also supported by Cava (1999) who reported that students with negative attitudes towards writing appeared to be more impatient with the process of writing and were more reluctant to engage in writing activities. Additionally, Hassan (2001) also found that writing apprehension negatively affected the writing quality and quantity of L2 learners. These studies have prompted numerous questions about the significance of writing attitude in L2 writing process, writing performance and L2 writing instructions. These questions are related to the aims of this thesis as writing attitude is seen as one of the predictors of L2 writing performance.

## 2.7 Error Analysis in L2 writing

In the domain of second language writing, errors have often been the subject of interest among L2 teachers and linguists. In the classroom, L2 writing teachers constantly correct the grammar and language errors that students make in writing so that these errors do not become fossilized. Due to the emphasis on error correction, there is a lot of focus on teaching students grammatical rules which are thought to be problematic due to L1 interference. As reported by Ferris (2002), error correction and grammar instructions became major focus of writing instruction in L2 classes. Additionally linguists are also more focused on finding reasonable explanations for the occurrence of errors and their implication towards the learning and teaching process (Darus & Khor, 2009).

According to Ferris (2002), one of the most prominent differences between L1 and L2 student writers is that L2 writers make errors related both to negative transfer from L1 and undeveloped acquisition of the L2. Ferris (2003:4) adds, “Though L1 student writing is obviously not error-free, the errors made are different in quantity and nature”. One consistent feature, which is different from L1 writing, is that L2 writers switch back and forth between their L1 and L2 while composing a text. The activity of switching back and forth between L1 and L2 in the composing process is common among both skilled and unskilled L2 writers. As reported by Leki *et al.*, (2008:132-133), L1 was vastly used in the L2 composing process and was more likely to occur in process-controlling, idea generating and idea organizing activities than in text generating activities. Additionally, a number of studies reported that L1 was used for planning (Cumming, 1987; Wang & Wen, 2002), idea generation (Sasaki, 2000) and



sentence construction (McCarthy *et al.* 2005). In other words, the use of L1 in L2 writing is inevitable (Brown, 1980). In order to understand why L2 learners make errors when learning a second language, the following insights taken from Ferris (2002:5) are considered.

- *It takes a significant amount of time to acquire an L2, and even more when the learner is attempting to use the language for academic purposes.*
- *Depending on learner characteristics, most notably age of first exposure to the L2, some acquirers may never attain native like control of various aspects of the L2.*
- *SLA occurs in stages. Vocabulary, morphology, phonology, and syntax may all represent separately occurring stages of acquisition.*
- *As learners go through various stages of acquisition of different elements of the L2, they will make errors reflective of their SLA processes. These errors may be caused by inappropriate transference of L1 patterns and/or by incomplete knowledge of the L2. Written errors made by adult L2 acquirers are therefore often quite different from those made by native speakers.*

These insights, particularly the fourth, are relevant to this thesis as the occurrence of errors is explained from the perspective of SLA. As Ellis (1994) stated, the characteristics of learner language, which involve errors is one of the four essential areas of SLA investigation. Brown (1994) and Connor (1996) divide errors into two categories: inter-lingual transfer and intra-lingual errors. Inter-lingual errors are those that result from L1 interference, while intra-lingual errors are those that are caused by inadequate learning and difficulties inherent in mastering the target language itself (Ho,

1973). These errors occur during the learning process of the second language learning at a phase when the learners have not really mastered the language (Richards, 1974). Although there are many causes for the occurrence of errors in L2 writing, L1 interference and lack of L2 proficiency have been reported to have the most influence. As reported in the literature, L2 writers use their L1 to transfer their L1 knowledge to L2 writing contexts (Edelsky, 1982), plan their writing for text generation (Jones & Tetroe, 1987; cited in Raimes, 1987) and to develop ideas and produce text content and organization (Lay, 1982). In addition, Wang (2003) also found that low proficient ESL learners often concentrated on direct translation from their L1 into the L2 to compensate for their linguistic deficiencies in their writing processes. These translations often result in errors and consequently affect writing performance.

The analysis of errors enables the researcher to gather valuable information on the strategies that L2 learners use to acquire a language. As Harishima (2006) stated, by collecting raw linguistic sample and analysing errors within it, researchers can closely examine and potentially explain the linguistic competence of a second language learner. The main rationale for using error analysis in this thesis was to investigate the relationship between the learners' linguistic competence, writing performance and written errors. From a broader perspective, the objective reported in this thesis was to present basic ideas for why an L2 writer relies on L1 when writing and whether this reliance is related to the occurrence of errors and writing performance. For this purpose, the error analysis procedure involving identification, description, classification and evaluation of errors were carried out in this thesis.

## **2.8 The context of Malaysia**

### **2.8.1 *A brief history of English in Malaysia***

English is a second language in Malaysia and is a compulsory subject in schools and universities. It was first introduced by the British Government in the early nineteenth century and since then its significance in Malaysia has grown tremendously. During the pre-independence era (before 1957), English was the central medium of instruction and a compulsory subject in all primary and secondary schools (Course of Studies Regulations, 1956, II cited in Foo & Richards, 2004). After the Malayan independence in 1957, the government announced Malay language as the national language and employed the National Education policy (Foo & Richards, 2004). One of the implications of this policy was that Malay eventually replaced English as the medium of instruction in schools and English gradually became a second language in the country. During the implementation of the National Education Policy in 1974, a new Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) based English syllabus was drawn for primary and secondary school. According to Richards and Rodger (2001), this was done in keeping up with the universalistic trends in ELT which was moving toward a communicative approach.

By the year 2000, the new syllabi for primary and secondary schools were fully implemented. It was at this time that Malaysia experienced a growth in information and communication technology (ICT). Due to this and the advent of globalization, an increase in international exchanges was seen and this made the government aware of the importance of English in the country. As a result of this awareness, the implementation of teaching Maths and Science in English was reintroduced in January 2003 (Abdullah, 2004). The mixed medium of instruction was introduced so that students would learn

Science and Mathematics in English. This policy was implemented for several years throughout the country. In January 2012, the Ministry of Education changed its policy and reverted to using Malay language as the official medium of instruction in schools. Although the government has abolished the teaching of Maths and Science in schools, most public universities still use English as the medium of instruction for the science, engineering and medical courses.

### **2.8.2 *Educational system in Malaysia***

Malaysia has two types of schooling systems: The Malay-medium National Schools and the non-Malay-medium National-type Schools or Vernacular Schools. Both primary and secondary educations use this system. Primary education in Malaysia referred to as Standard 1 to 6, starts at age seven and lasts for six years. Standard 1 to Standard 3 is classified as Level One while Standard 4 to Standard 6 is classified as Level Two. Students progressed to the next level regardless of their academic performance. However, before progressing to secondary education, Standard 6 students must sit for the Primary School Achievement Test. The subjects tested are Malay, English, Science and Mathematics. In addition to the five subjects, Chinese comprehension and written Chinese are compulsory in Chinese vernacular schools, while Tamil comprehension and written Tamil are compulsory in Tamil vernacular schools.

Public secondary education in Malaysia is provided by National Secondary Schools. The main medium of instruction in National Secondary Schools is Malay and English is considered a compulsory subject. Secondary education is made up of 3 years

of Lower Secondary, referred to as Form 1 to 3 and 2 years of Upper Secondary, referred to as Form 4 and 5. Most students who completed primary education are admitted to secondary school at Form 1 level. However, students from vernacular primary schools have the additional requirement to obtain a minimum C grade for the Malay subject in the Primary School Achievement Test, failing which they will have to attend a one year transition class, called "Remove Class" (Foo & Richards, 2004). At the end of Form 3, students will sit for the Lower Certificate of Education (LCE) or Lower Secondary Evaluation. Based on exam results and partly students' own preference, they will be streamed into either the Science stream or Arts stream in Form 4.

At the end of Form 5, students are required to take the Malaysian Certificate of Education examination, before graduating from secondary school. The exam was based on the old British School Certificate examination before it became the GCE (General Certificate of Education). As of 2006, students are given a GCE 'O' Level grade for their English paper in addition to the normal English Malaysia Certificate of Examination paper. This separate grade is given based on the marks of the essay-writing component of the English paper. The essay section of the English paper is re-assessed under the supervision of officials from the British 'O' Levels examination. Although not part of their final certificates, the 'O' Level grade is included on the results slip.

After Form 5, students would proceed to either Form 6 or the matriculation (pre-university) before starting tertiary level education. If they are accepted to continue studying in Form 6, they will also take the Malaysian Higher School Certificate examination. Form 6 consists of two years of study which is known as Lower 6 and

Upper 6. Although it is generally taken by those who plan to enter public universities in Malaysia, it is internationally recognized and may also be used to enter private local universities for undergraduate programmes. Unlike the Higher School Certificate, a matriculation certificate is only valid for universities within Malaysia. This matriculation is a one or two-year programme offered by the Ministry of Education. After completing the matriculation programme, successful students can then proceed to embarking on tertiary level education.

Tertiary education in Malaysia basically covers certificate, diploma, and undergraduate as well as postgraduate levels. Undergraduate studies consist of Bachelor's Degree levels and professional studies while postgraduate studies consist of Master's Degree and PhD levels. Higher education at certificate and diploma levels is for students from the age of 17 while the Bachelor's degree level is for students from the age of 19 or 20 onwards with Pre-University qualifications. These degree programmes normally take between 3 to 5 years to complete. After obtaining their Bachelor's degree, students can proceed to postgraduate studies. Students also have the option of enrolling in private institutions.

### ***2.8.3 The teaching of English language proficiency at the tertiary level***

Similar to primary and secondary education, English is a compulsory subject at the tertiary level education in Malaysia. Although there is no common syllabus for English language teaching at the tertiary level, it is taken as a prerequisite subject in all public universities. Students who are taking pre-degree courses are required to take English proficiency subjects during their course of study. If they have not taken the

required credits of English proficiency subject, they cannot graduate. The courses offered in public universities range from Basic English courses for students at the intermediate level to more advanced courses such as Preparatory Course for MUET and English for Occupational Purposes. Basic English courses are designed to upgrade the proficiency level of pre-diploma writing, listening and speaking. The emphasis is on developing communicative fluency based on grammatical accuracy. English for Occupational Purposes is aimed at preparing students to meet the demands of their respective disciplines. This is achieved by training students to employ the language skills and strategies necessary to carry out their academic tasks (Academy of Language Studies, 2003). Before embarking on a degree study, candidates are required to sit for the Malaysian University English Test (MUET). The result is based on a score of band 1 – band 6 with band 1 as the least proficient (Othman & Rashid, 2011). The English courses that students would have to take during their study years are based on their MUET results.

Students at diploma level, as is the case of participants in Study 3 of this thesis, attend between 4 to 6 hours of English classes per week. Lecturers are required to follow a course outline provided by the language faculty and in some cases, use a standard workbook prescribed in the syllabus. Although participants in Study 3 took different English courses, the components in the course syllabi are quite similar. All courses include components of Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing. Courses for the intermediate and upper intermediate levels place more emphasis on grammar acquisition, while advanced courses like English for Occupational purposes place more emphasis on oral communication skills. One particular concern of this thesis is the lack of emphasis on vocabulary teaching in ELT classes at the tertiary level. The course

outline shows that vocabulary is not included as part of the sub skills in the reading component for Basic English courses. Nor is it included in the advanced courses. Although this is worrying, it is not surprising as vocabulary has often been perceived as unimportant. As argued by Naginder *et al.* (2008) vocabulary instruction tends to take a backseat in teaching priorities and distinguished as the poor relation of language teaching.

## **2.9 The need for the present work**

As discussed at the beginning of this chapter, second language text production involves complex processes which are related to cognitive, meta-cognitive and social factors. Knowing how these factors promote or inhibit the successful orientation of L2 students' text production and the underlying theories behind it may provide useful insights as to how best to teach writing. Nonetheless at present, most studies depend on L1 writing theories as guidelines as there is no grounded theory of L2 writing. Silva (2003) noted that these theories are largely monolingual, monocultural and ethnocentric, criteria typical of L1 writing but rare amongst most L2 writing populations. Hence theories derived from studies of L1 populations may not apply to L2 writing and, therefore may not provide adequate theoretical explanations. As both Cumming and Rizai (2000) and Silva (1993) argue, L2 writing does not have agreed-upon theories. Grabe (2001:48) also stated, "there is still a lack of predictive model of the construct of writing that would be directly and transparently useful for research agendas, instructional practices, curricular planning and assessment efforts". The first rationale reported in this thesis is related to the fact that there is limited amount of research on L2 writing in the



Malaysian and New Zealand context which could be used as a guiding framework for L2 writing instruction. As Chan and Abdullah (2003) argue, studies on second language writing in countries other than the USA, Australia, Canada and UK is minimal. Additionally, research studies involving higher education learners in Malaysia are relatively small (Che Musa, 2012). As a consequence, instructors are often left with their own resources in the classroom as much of the relevant theory fails to reach them (Hyland, 2003). Hence there is a pressing need for a research informing practice to inform the development of L2 writing instructions at tertiary level education, which is what the current work aims to do.

The second rationale reported in this thesis is linked to the fact that most Malaysian students do not seem to be able to attain reasonable English literacy even after going through 11 years of learning English in school (Naginder *et al.*, 2008). As some studies have shown, most learners who enter universities have limited critical ability to respond to an academic text (Ahmad, 2007 cited in Che Musa *et al.* 2012) and lack the conventions of academic writing needed to write well in academic discipline (Krishnakumari, Paul-Evanson & Selvanayagam, 2010 cited in Che Musa *et al.* 2012). Studies have reported that students themselves regard lack of lexical competence as one of the major hindrances in learning the target language (Nation, 2001). According to Hyland (2003), students recognize language difficulties, particularly an insufficient grasp of vocabulary and grammar, as their main problems with writing and frequently express their frustration at being unable to express their ideas in correct English. These quotes are taken from students taking a writing course at pre-university and pre-graduate programmes in New Zealand:

*I have some ideas and I can't, I can make it in my language or in my opinions, sometimes it's English, but I can't write down correctly. Ah, my essay always don't be academic. It just tend to write personal writing always. Or my ideas don't stay one point always. Still quite unskilful and what I want to say isn't expressed, isn't explained in my essay. – Japanese student*

*I will never reach the advanced stage because another language is not my own language...and it takes a long time to know when you describe something you have to choose another word, not just by some sample words. If I have a good idea but I cannot write down my idea and I cannot graduate. – Taiwanese student*

*Right at first I tell you this is what I think in my language and I write in English and native speakers who use English fluently will not understand. But if I give this to my Thai friends to read, they will understand and admire every time...In my mind I can think more than I can write. I cannot find the suitable word. I just use simple words and not the ones that show the deep meaning. -Thai student*

(Hyland, 2003:34-35)

The quotes suggest that many ESL writers are unable to express their ideas as they would like in English. As various studies have reported, lexical paralysis is the main cause of learners' incapability to cope with language skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing (see Chan & Abdullah, 2004; Malek, 2000; Naginder & Kabilan,

2007). Despite the relevance of vocabulary knowledge in the development of ESL language skills, vocabulary remains a much neglected area in ELT as it is not the most favoured of activities among Malaysian teachers and learners (Kaur, 2008). As Croft, (1980) reported, in many instructional approaches, focus on structural signals and grammatical patterns of the language seem to override vocabulary and students are more often than not expected to pick up vocabulary on their own, with little or no guidance (Crookall & Oxford, 1990). Furthermore, Hassan and Fauzee (2002) reported that vocabulary exercises ranked fourth, out of nine language tasks observed on the frequency of use in an ESL.

As it is, ESL lessons at the tertiary level are designed without much consideration on learners' level of proficiency. Since students are streamed according to course programmes, instructors expect them to have a similar level of academic and critical literacy needed to meet the academic demands of the course. With regards to writing, most lessons are based on institutional constraints and writing instructors' preferences instead of what the students' need to learn. Such simplistic categorization hinders L2 students' development in writing as they are not taught according to what they know. Therefore, there is a need to determine whether a writing intervention which considers individual learners' level of proficiency can help develop learners' writing ability and subsequently their writing performance.

The third rationale of this study is that it provides an interesting comparison of the pattern of second language writing processes among ESL students in both the New Zealand and Malaysian settings. The findings from this study will not only enrich the literature of second language writing but they may also serve as a platform for more in-depth and broader comparative studies. As the literature suggests, there is no standard

theory of L2 writing which can be generally used as guidelines in different L2 writing contexts. Given this deficiency, there is a need to conduct comparative studies which cover two or multiple different contexts. Hence this study aims to provide the differences and similarities between predictors of writing among ESL students in New Zealand and Malaysia. This aspect of the study provides new information in L2 writing, especially in the context of ESL teaching in an English-dominant setting and a non-English dominant setting. Insights from the present work may also inform the development of L2 writing instructions which can be used across different settings.

The findings reported in this thesis aim to provide insights on the relationship between L2 learners' lexical proficiency, writing strategies, writing attitude, writing errors and writing performance via quantitative data collection method. The use of quantitative method in the current work will allow for a larger amount of samples and generalisability across different contexts. In addition, the utilization of mainly quantitative data, derived by combining different techniques such as questionnaires, interviews, vocabulary tests and timed-writing task attempts to achieve more reliable results which may be seen as more valid. In the aspect of data analysis procedure, this research will use the ESL Composition Profile (Jacobs, 1981) to assess students' writing text. As Silva (1989:5) reported, this rubric is the most comprehensive treatment of ESL composition evaluation. It was important to select a standard instrument in L2 studies as the infrequent use of common instruments by researchers makes findings of different studies very difficult to compare (Silva, 1989). Therefore, the utilisation of this scoring rubric will allow for comparisons with previous research in the field.

## **2.10 Ethical considerations**

It was crucial at this stage to take into consideration the impact that the research might have on ESL students at the tertiary level. It was necessary to consider the discomfort that the student might feel about doing the tasks in the research. Therefore, it was very important that the study corresponded with the code of ethics. All participants in this study were provided with an explanation of the researcher's purpose of the study and the intended outcome of the research process. Each participant was guaranteed anonymity and assured that his/ her feedback would be kept confidential. Participants were also provided with the assurance that the option to withdraw from the research process at any time was afforded. After this information was briefed, participants signed a consent form (see Appendix A, B, C and D).

## **CHAPTER THREE:**

### **EXPLORING THE FACTORS OF SECOND LANGUAGE WRITING**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

Literature in the field of L2 writing has investigated contributing factors of L2 writing performance. Among the variables commonly featured are learners' writing strategies, learners' second language proficiency, first language (L1) interference, and learners' instructional background. The purpose of the present study was (a) to investigate the relationship between writing strategies, L2 proficiency and writing performance, and (b) to determine if the research instruments, the writing tasks and data collection procedures were clear and appropriate to assess the contributing factors of L2 writing. An important aspect of this study is that it provides an insight into the writing strategies of L2 writers studying English in an English-dominant setting as well as provides the basis for using the appropriate measure in investigating the contributing factors of L2 writing.

#### **3.2 Research Questions**

The research questions that guided the design of the measures used in this study were as follows:

1. Do ESL learners practice effective writing strategies?

2. At which particular stage of the composing processes do ESL learners use most of their L1?
3. What is the relationship between interest in writing English and the use of L1 in writing?
4. What is the relationship between interest in writing in English and writing strategies?
5. What is the relationship between L2 proficiency and writing performance?

### **3.3 Participants**

The data from this study were collected from 23 undergraduates, international students studying in New Zealand. These students are subsample from the 109 participants participating in this thesis. Participants in Group 1 of the current study were 10 ESL / EFL students enrolled in a low-intermediate English programme in a language College in New Zealand. There were equal number of male and female participants who were all above 18 years of age and they came from diverse ethnic backgrounds. The population within this group included students from China, Thailand, Korea, Japan and Portugal who were all streamed according to the results of a placement test given at the beginning of the semester (Study Skills, 2006). The course that the participants were taking was General English and they were all studying towards Cambridge FCE.

Participants in Group 2 of this study were 13 ESL/EFL students enrolled in a bridging programme, primarily focused on academic writing skills at a University in New Zealand. Most of the participants were male (76.9%) and they came from ethnically diverse backgrounds. The population within the course included students

from China, Thailand, Saudi Arabia and Spain. English was a second or foreign language for all participants and all of them were above 18 years of age.

### **3.4 Instruments and Procedure**

#### ***3.4.1 Writing Strategies Questionnaire***

Based on the research reviewed in Chapter 2, several methods of data collection particularly for writing strategy were assessed and considered. It was acknowledged that in L2 writing studies think-aloud method was the most popular in describing students' writing strategies. This research tool had a big influence on writing research in L1 and L2 but it has received a lot of criticisms. The tool was deemed intrusive as thinking aloud while writing interfered with the writing process. In addition, this method can only be used with a small group of students (for e.g. 5-10 students). Bracewell and Breuleux (1986) in Wong (2005) also criticized the think-aloud method for causing problems of reliability. Given that this study intended to cover a bigger number of samples, Petric and Czarl's (2003) writing strategy questionnaire was used as an alternative to the think-aloud method. In the context of this study, writing strategies are defined as actions or behaviours consciously carried out by writers in order to make their writing more efficient (Cohen, 1998). Hence, writing strategies are viewed as being participants' own observations of the writing strategies they normally use when writing. The use of this method was chosen as it is less intrusive and allows for a wider range of samples. Petric and Czarl (2003) also noted that this method enables researchers to compare findings in different contexts.

The writing strategy questionnaire has two sections. Section 1 consists of six questions that elicit information on participants' sex, native language, and instructional background, exposure to English course before enrolling in the current programme, L2



writing exposure and interest in writing in English. Participants' writing strategies during the writing process were covered through Section 2 of the questionnaire. This comprised thirty-eight items. The first eight statements looked at strategies in the pre-writing stage; the next fourteen statements focused on strategies used in the drafting stage; the last sixteen statements looked at strategies used in the revising stage. Participants were asked to rate each statement on a five-point scale indicating 1 (never or almost never true of me), 2 (usually not true of me-less than half of the time), 3 (somewhat true of me-about half of the time), 4 (usually true of me-more than half of the time) and 5 (always or almost always true of me). Table 1 outlines the structure of the questionnaire.

**Table 1. Structure of the Writing Strategies Questionnaire**

Section	Section Title	Number of Items
1	General Questions	6
2	The Writing Process:	
2.1	Before I Start Writing in English	8
2.2	When Writing in English	14
2.3	When Revising	16

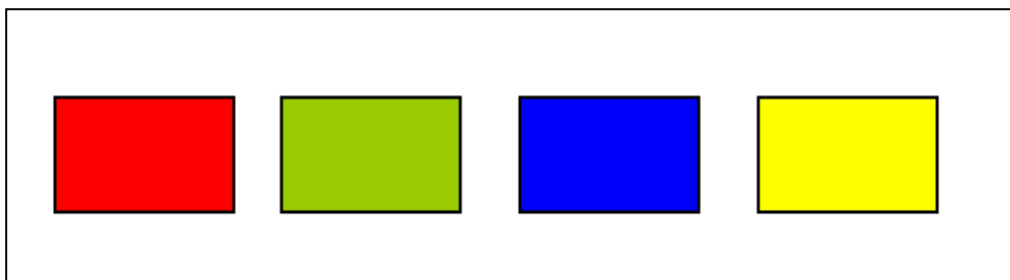
Note: Please refer to Appendix E for the complete questionnaire

### **3.4.2 L2 Proficiency measure**

In the current study, participants' L2 proficiency was measured through a vocabulary test and a naming measure. The primary instrument used to measure participants' vocabulary size was the 1000 level taken from Nation's (1993) Vocabulary

Level Tests (VLT). The 1000 level test used in this study consists of thirty-nine items which required participants to indicate whether each statement was True, Not True or Not Sure (see Appendix F). The vocabulary test was deemed appropriate as previous studies have shown that knowing a large number of words in a language, regardless of depth of knowledge, is an important factor in L2 learning (Nation 1990; Meara 1996; Laufer 1989). Furthermore, the importance of vocabulary knowledge for L2 learners in writing has been highlighted in the literature (Laufer & Nation, 1995; Lee, 2003; Leki & Carson, 1994; Walters & Wolf, 1996). In addition to being valid and reliable, the test was chosen because it is easy to administer and score. This aspect was important as the participants' class schedule was tight and thus data collection could only be done in one session. Additionally, the vocabulary test is easily obtainable, as Nation has published it as an appendix several times (1990, 1993, 2001).

In addition to the vocabulary test, a rapid naming task was also used to assess the participants' L2 proficiency. This rapid naming task focuses on speeded access of English words and it measures the fluency of English word naming. For this preliminary study, a simple colour naming task was selected in consideration of the age and language level of the participants. Since all participants were in the low-intermediate level and had just arrived in New Zealand, the task was deemed appropriate. The task used in this study was a test of colour identification in L2 and the target stimuli consists of forty coloured squares. The measure required the participants to name all items appeared on an A4 paper as fast as they could, trying to avoid making errors. A stop watch was used to record the time taken by the participants to name all the items. The time duration was recorded in seconds, along with any naming errors (see Appendix G). An example of the stimuli is as follows:



### **3.4.3 Writing performance measure**

A timed-essay was used as the instrument of writing performance in this study. Participants were asked to write an argumentative essay based on the following prompt:

*As a student, how can you earn extra cash? Explain the ways in an expository essay. You are given 30 minutes to write this essay and you can write as much as you want.*

This topic was selected as the content was the least restricted by knowledge limitations and it was thematically easy to write. Considering that all of the participants were young adults, it was believed that money issue was something that most of them could relate to. Furthermore, the task did not set any limitations on the type of language and grammatical structures expected and thus, allowed participants to employ a wide range of words and structures. Additionally, there was no word limit so participants could write as many words as they wanted. The only restriction was participants were not allowed to use a dictionary during the writing task.

### **3.4.4 Assessment of Writing Output**

An analytic rating scale known as the ESL Composition Profile developed by Jacobs *et al.* (1981) was originally chosen as the scoring rubric to assess participants' writing output. The *Profile* consists of five rating scales, which distinguishes four level

of mastery: excellent to very good, good to average, fair to poor and very poor. However, due to limited essay content and length found in participants' essay, this rating scale was not utilised in the writing assessment. This is because some of the features outlined in the profile such as vocabulary and mechanics could not be properly assessed without a comprehensive amount of writing input. Therefore, a holistic marking rubric was used as an alternative to the Jacobs (1981) scale. The marking rubric distinguishes 9 types of writers which are marked on the scale of 0.5 to 10. The categories are: Superior Writer, Competent Writer, Functional Writer, Basic Writer, Limited Writer, Marginal Writer, Defective Writer, Beginner Writer and Non-Writer. This holistic scoring rubric was chosen as it allows for a more impressionistic marking of participants' essay. Since most of the essays were limited in length, it was difficult to disentangle specific criteria in writing such as mechanics from language or content from presentation. Therefore, a holistic assessment of participants' essay would better capture their writing ability. The complete rubric is presented in Table 2.

**Table 2. Holistic scoring rubric for writing component**

<b>MARK</b>	<b>CATEGORY</b>	<b>STRUCTURAL CHARACTERISTICS</b>	<b>COMMUNICATIVE CHARACTERISTICS</b>
9-10	Superior Writer	No errors in elementary structures.	Creative, talented writing which has impact and can deal with subtleties and abstractions well beyond simple mastery of language.
8-8.5	Competent Writer	No errors in elementary structures.	Clear, accurate presentation showing full control of the language. Uses discourse markers confidently to show flow of thought. No obvious mistakes in choice of words or use of phrases.
7-7.5	Functional Writer	Occasional structural errors. Very few errors in fundamental noun and verb structures.	Shows good organization of main themes and supporting details. The essay can be read easily with little mental effort. Very few errors in the use of words or phrases.
6-6.5	Basic writer	Occasional structural errors. 80% control of basic grammar.	Conveys message clearly and accurately, but lacks precision in choice of words or phrases. Reasonably correct but limited range of sentence types.
5-5.5	Limited writer	Frequent errors. Can consistently use one tense as needed.	Lacking in clarity. Many inappropriate words and phrases. Short sentences and lack of expansion that limit the appeal of the presentation.
4-4.5	Marginal writer	Frequent errors. Repeatedly makes mistakes in verb or noun structures.	Some supporting details present but expressed in long, undivided strings of phrases.
3-3.5	Defective writer	Frequent errors. Little control of tenses.	Can only use the simplest and shortest of sentence patterns. Many fragments or incomplete sentences. Inappropriate direct translations from the native language.
2-2.5	Beginner writer	Very few error free sentences. Most inflections (-ed, -ing etc) incorrect.	Consists entirely of sentence fragments. Words used as a string of symbols rather than structures. Native language words and phrases appear frequently.
0.5-1.5	Non-writer	No error free sentences.	Difficulty even with copying words/phrases from the question/situation given. Does not understand the question or task.

Note: Multiply the score by two

### **3.4.5 Procedure**

All participants were given a Participant Information Sheet and asked to sign a consent form, in accordance with the University of Canterbury Human Ethics Committee's requirement. The form indicated that the study concerned L2 students' second language writing process, that the students were not required to participate and, if they did participate, they could withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. All students signed the form and participated fully. Data collection for Group A occurred in one session that took 2 hours, while data collection for Group 2 took 40 minutes. A questionnaire was administered in both classes and participants were instructed to complete it individually. All sections in the questionnaire included instructions and examples to aid comprehension. Participants were also instructed to ask for help if they had any difficulty completing the questionnaire.

After completing the questionnaire, participants in Group 1 completed the vocabulary test in the duration of 20 minutes. After the vocabulary test, participants in Group 1 were given a naming task which involved colour identification in L2. The assessment for the naming task was done individually and scores of time taken by participants to complete the tasks were recorded in a table. Participants in Group 2 did not turn up for the second session of data collection procedures which involved the administration of the vocabulary test and naming task. This was due to their busy schedule and time constraints. It was the beginning of the semester for these groups of participants and they were required to attend a lot of orientation activities outside class hours. During administration of all the measures, participants were allowed to ask questions regarding task instructions and allowed to take breaks when necessary.

### 3.5 Results

#### 3.5.1 Participants' background and characteristics

Table 3 presents participants' background and characteristics. As can be seen, the majority of participants were male and they came from ethnically diverse backgrounds. Additionally, the majority of participants (60.9%) had attended a course in writing before enrolling in their course programme that many of them (56.5%) like having the chance to write in English. Based on a descriptive statistics of participants' L2 experience in terms of total years spent studying English, it was found that these learners had varying degrees of formal instruction in English, with a mean of 7.1 and a standard deviation of 5.4.

**Table 3. Characteristics and writing background of participants in Study 3**

		%	
		Number	Respondents
Gender	Male	8	34.8
	Female	15	65.2
Native language	Chinese	7	30.4
	Thai	6	26.1
	Korean	2	8.7
	Japanese	1	4.3
	Portugese	1	4.3
	Arabic	5	21.7
	Spanish	1	4.3
Attended a course in writing before enrolling in the university	Yes	14	60.9
	No	9	39.1
Like writing in English	I do not like it	4	17.4
	I have no feeling about it	6	26.1
	I like it a lot	13	56.5

*N*=23

### 3.5.2 *Writing Strategies Data*

Based on reliability analysis, it was found that the alpha coefficient (Cronbach, 1951) of .841 supported the moderately high reliability of the scale. In addition to the reliability analysis, the items in the questionnaire were also subjected to scrutiny and evaluation of three experts: a professor from the College of Education at the University of Canterbury, a retired TESOL lecturer who has had 20 years of teaching experience in ESL and an ESL lecturer with a TESL background. This was done to ensure the content validity of the questionnaire. After evaluations were made, it was decided that the writing strategies questionnaire was a relatively valid and reliable measure of ESL students' writing strategies.

The first research question – whether participants applied effective writing strategies when writing – was addressed by looking at participants' responses for items in section 2 of the questionnaire. With regard to strategies at the pre-writing stage, it was found that 34.8% of participants answered *usually not true of me* and 8.5% answered *never true of me* when asked whether they revise the writing requirements. It was also discovered that 47.8% of participants answered *usually true of me* to the statement *I start writing with a mental or written plan*. Mixed responses were found for the strategy of noting down words related to the topic. It was found that 30.4% of respondents answered usually not true of me and somewhat true of me when asked whether they apply this strategy. This suggests that the participants were unfamiliar with this strategy or they do not usually apply it when writing.

At the drafting stage, over half (56.5%) of the respondents reported that they always start writing with an introduction. With regard to writing fluency, it was discovered that most respondents (47.8%) do not stop after each sentence when writing.



Instead, they were more likely to stop after a few sentences. Most respondents reread what's written to get ideas on how to continue but they do not go back to outline to make changes in it. With regard to the use of L1, it was found that 56.5% of participants answered *usually not true of me* when asked whether they write bits of text in L1. However, 39.1% of participants *answered usually true of me* to the statement *I write in my native language if I don't know a word in English*. These findings suggest that some participants may try to avoid using L1 when they draft their essays but those who encounter linguistic difficulty may resort to using L1 when they fail to express something in English. Additionally, it was found that 39.2% of participants simplify what they want to write if they do not know how to express themselves. The obvious concern that was pointed out from the result was the participants' apprehension with grammar and vocabulary. It was found that 47.8% of participants were not sure of their grammar and vocabulary accuracy when drafting their essays.

At the revising stage, most respondents do not read their text aloud with 34.8% of participants answering *usually not true of me*. It was also discovered that 43.5% of participants answered *very true of me* when asked whether they hand in their paper after reading. In terms of editing strategies, 47.8% of respondents answered *somewhat true of me* when asked whether they make changes in vocabulary. Meanwhile, 47.8% of participants answered *somewhat true of me* when asked whether they would make changes in sentence structure. In terms work editing, a high percentage (34.8%) of respondents answered *somewhat true of me* and *usually not true of me* when asked whether they make changes in content/ ideas. A majority of respondents (50%) are less likely to focus on one thing at a time when revising and 43.5% of respondents check to see if their essay matches the requirements. Only 21.7% of respondents answered

somewhat true of me for the statement *I show my text to somebody and ask opinion*. The result leans towards not showing their text to somebody and asks opinion. Respondents also seem to be reserved when it comes to comparing essays with their peers. Only 17.4% of respondents answered usually true of me for this item and the rest seems to lean towards not comparing essays. Respondents are also less likely to self-reward as only 4.3% of participants answered very true of me for this item.

With regard to the second research question – at which stage of the writing process do learners use most of their L1 - it was found that only 13% of participants make their outline using their native language at the pre writing stage. At the drafting stage, it was found 39.1% of participants would write in the L1 and later find an appropriate English word. Also at the drafting stage, findings revealed that only 13% of the participants would write bits of text in the L1. This result suggests that most participants do not write an outline in L1 but would resort to using L1 when they cannot find an appropriate word in English at the drafting stage.

### ***3.5.3 Performance Data***

#### L2 Proficiency

Table 4 presents the descriptive analysis of the vocabulary test and naming task for Group 1. As can be seen, for the 1000 level vocabulary test, scores ranged from 15 to 38, with a mean of 31.5 and a standard deviation of 6.19. The distribution for the vocabulary test suggests that it was not difficult for the students, given the relatively high mean scores. For the object naming task, scores for time-taken to complete the task ranged from 16 to 26, with a mean of 21.4 and a standard deviation of 2.91. The minimum number of errors was 0 and the maximum was 4. Since the number of naming

errors was small, the time was used as the measure for this task. The results seem to suggest that the test was not difficult for the participants given the low mean score for time taken to complete it.

**Table 4. Descriptive statistics of L2 proficiency for Group 1**

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD
Vocabulary test scores	10	15	38	31.5	6.19
Time taken for naming task	10	16	26	21.4	2.91
Number of errors for naming task	10	0	4	0.8	1.48

### Writing Performance

The writing performance in this study was based on 10 essays written by participants in Group 1. As Table 5 outlines, scores ranged from 8 to 20, with a mean of 11 and a standard deviation of 1.56. The distribution for the written test suggests that most participants did not get a good score in the test, given the relatively low mean score. As for number of words, the length ranged from 118 to 241, with a mean of 166 and a standard deviation of 41.7. This suggests that most participants only produced between one to two paragraph-essays within the time limit given.

**Table 5. Descriptive statistics of writing performance for Group 1**

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD
Essay Scores	10	8.0	13	11	1.56
Total number of words produced	10	118	241	166.5	41.7

### Relationships between Variables

A further analysis looking at relationships between variables was conducted in the study. Results in Table 6 highlight the correlation analysis between interest in writing in English and writing strategies. Findings revealed that liking to write in English was associated with L1 use in the pre-writing and drafting stage. As shown in Table 6, there is a trend towards a relationship between interest in writing in English and the strategy *writing an outline in the native language*. As can be seen, there is also evidence for a relationship between interest in writing in English and the strategy *writing in L1 first and finds an appropriate English word later*. This finding, while preliminary, suggests that higher interest in writing in English may be a factor in the use of L1 in writing. This suggests that students who like writing in English may be more prone to using the target language in the pre-writing and drafting stage.

The next relationship looks at the connection between participants' interest in writing in English and their confidence in grammar and vocabulary. Findings from the study suggest that learners who are interested in writing in English are more confident of their grammar and vocabulary when writing. This positive relationship, although unreliable, indicates that participants who like to write in English are less apprehensive about grammar and vocabulary. The next analysis looks at the link between learners'

use of dictionary and interest in writing in English. The result in Table 6 suggests that interest in L2 writing may be associated with the preference to use a bilingual dictionary, instead of a monolingual dictionary.

**Table 6. Correlation between interest in writing in English and writing strategies**

<b>Strategies</b>	<b>Interest in writing in English</b>
Write outline in native language	-.243
Writing in L1 first and find appropriate word in English later	-.528**
Think about what to write and have a plan in mind	.302
Sure of grammar and vocabulary	.206
Use a bilingual dictionary	.129
Use a monolingual dictionary	-.167
Focus on one thing at a time	.380
Show text to somebody and ask opinion	.207

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

With regard to strategies in the revising stage, the act of making changes in vocabulary, content and ideas seems to be related to participants' interest in writing in English. This was indicated by the positive correlations in the result (.207, .214). Although the relationships were not significant, the findings suggest that interest, which is an affective factor, may be related to learners' writing strategies.

### **3.6 Changes resulting from the study**

An analysis on participants' questionnaire responses and writing output was made to draw important insights on the feasibility and appropriateness of the research measures. Based on these insights and findings gathered from the current study, three main suggestions to more effectively administer Study 2 were identified. First, measures used to assess participants' L2 Proficiency needed to include varying degrees of task difficulty. As findings in this study suggest, the vocabulary measure was relatively too easy for the participants. This was indicated by the relatively high mean scores. In addition, the results from only one vocabulary test and one naming measure were not sufficient in explaining participants' L2 proficiency. Based on these justifications, four of Nation's (1993) Vocabulary Level Tests which measure participants' vocabulary size were used in Study 2. The VLT was chosen because it is quick to take, easy to mark and easy to interpret (Nation, 2001), which makes it very practical for the study, given the limited amount of time the researcher had with the participants. Although the VLT was not piloted in this study, it has often been used by researchers to estimate the vocabulary size of non-English speaking learners (Read, 2000). Additionally, Beglar (1999) also reported a reliability coefficient of .95 for VLT in his study.

Another significant change that resulted from the present study was the elimination of the speed naming task from studies 2 and 3. The low mean score in the task completion time suggests that participants could complete the task quickly and that it was relatively too easy for them. A second reason that accounted for the elimination of this measure from the subsequent studies was that the naming measure is commonly used in other ESL studies involving children and not adults learners of English. Therefore, it was deemed more appropriate and practical to use a standardized measure

of L2 proficiency which is more commonly used among adult L2 learners. This would allow for more generalisation and consistency across different studies relative to L2 writing.

The second suggestion which resulted from this study affects the administration of the writing task. Findings in this study have shown that most participants did not have sufficient time to complete their essays. As reported in the result section, participants' essay length had a low mean score of 166. Due to limited production, some significant features of writing such as vocabulary use, cohesion and ideas development could not be detected in participants' writing output. Therefore, it was suggested that participants in Study 2 be given 60 minutes to complete the writing task instead of 30 minutes. As maintained by Silva's (1993) survey, limiting the writing time to 30-60 minutes is common in most related studies. The rationale for allocating a longer writing time in Study 2 was to encourage the participants to produce their best possible writing in the classroom setting.

The third suggestion which resulted from the findings of the present study was the revision of questionnaire items. This was important for the improvement of the test measures and development of new items relevant to the study. Changes in the questionnaire included eliminating irrelevant items, reordering items and replacing words and sentences that had been proven to be difficult or ambiguous for the participants. The changes and additions in the measures are as follows:

## *Writing Strategy Questionnaire*

### Section 1

#### a) Rephrasing

Item 3 in Section 1 was changed from *How many years have you been studying English* to *How many weeks/ months/ years have you been studying English? Please specify*. This item was rephrased as feedback from the participants indicated a diversified range of answers for example 3 months, 9 months and 15 years. The new version of this item aims to gather a more objective feedback from respondents.

#### Addition

#### b) Question: *Do you think that you are a good writer?*

Findings in this study indicated that a majority of participants like writing in English (Item 6 in section 1). Interest in writing can be considered as an affective factor in writing, one that has been linked to L2 writing performance (). Therefore, an new inquiry into the role of affective factor in L2 writing was deemed appropriate for the next study.

#### c) Addition

Question: *Which activity in the writing process do you find most difficult to carry out?*

This question was added as the researcher felt that it was important to discover the most challenging stage of the writing process for ESL learners. Since the



questionnaire used in the present study did not include this item, the addition was deemed appropriate.

- d) What normally stops you when you are writing?

This question was developed to tap information regarding ESL learners' challenges in writing as the original questionnaire did not include this item.

## Section 2

### Pre-Writing Stage

- a) Item 2.1.1 from Section 2 of the questionnaire was removed because this statement seemed irrelevant to the nature of the writing process. The statement "*I make a timetable for the writing process*" is not a natural part of timed-essay and it seemed unlikely that students would apply this strategy when given a timed-essay task in class.
- b) Item 2.1.4 which represents a negative polarity in the measure was changed from *I start writing without having a written or mental plan* to a sentence with a positive polarity, *I have a detailed plan of how I will organise my essay*. The reason for this change is because feedback and responses from participants suggested that they did not understand the statement. Thus, a more straightforward and simple statement was created.

- c) Item 2.1.5 *I think about what I want to write and have a plan in mind but not on paper* seemed to be confusing for the students as it contains two different ideas. Additionally it was not aimed to tap the use of L1 during the pre-writing stage. To reduce the complexity of the item, it was divided into three statements: 1. *I have a plan in mind* 2. *I think about what I want to write in my native language* and 3. *I write an outline of my writing in my native language*. This was done to tap information regarding participants' use of L1 in the pre-writing stage.
- d) A new item which aimed to tap information regarding the type of planning carried out in the pre writing stage was introduced. The statement, *I only plan what I want to write in the first paragraph* aims to investigate whether participants engage in local planning. In this case, if a participant answers 'Strongly agree', it means that he is doing local planning.
- e) An item aimed to investigate whether participants engage in global planning was also introduced. The item is *I plan what I want to write in each paragraph*. If a participant answers 'Strongly agree', it means that he is doing global planning.

#### Drafting Stage

- f) Item 2.2.7 in Section 2 was revised from *I am always sure of my grammar and vocabulary* to *I always have problems with my grammar and vocabulary*. The revision of this item was necessary as quite a number of students asked for clarification during data collection. Students did not understand the term "*sure of my grammar and vocabulary*" but they understood "*I have problems with*

*grammar and vocabulary*". Therefore, the item which has a positive polarity was changed to a negative polarity statement.

#### Revising Stage

- g) Item 2.3.14 from Section 2 of the questionnaire was removed because it seemed irrelevant to this study. The statement "*I compare my paper with the essay written by my friends on the same topic*" was deemed unnecessary as analysis of responses indicated that most participants answered not sure for this statement. It was also decided that this aspect of writing was not a crucial aspect of the study.
- h) Item 2.3.15 from Section 2 of the questionnaire was removed on the basis of participants' feedback. The responses from participants suggest that under normal circumstances in class, this strategy would not be applied in writing.  
Statement: *I give myself a reward for completing the assignment.*

### 3.7 Discussion

The primary purpose of this preliminary study was to explore the contributing factors of L2 writing performance and determine the appropriate measures for assessing those variables. With regard to Research Question 1, it was found that participants in this study do practice a set of writing strategies when planning, drafting and revising their essays. At the planning stage, participants would start writing with a mental or written plan. However, most participants would not note down words related to the topic or write an outline. This suggests that the main strategy employed during the planning stage was limited to preparing a mental plan. With regard to the use of L1, it

was found that only a minority of the participants make an outline using their native language during the pre writing stage.

At the drafting stage, participants reported that they always start with an introduction. Acknowledging that drafts almost always need to have an introduction, participants seemed to be aware of this important aspect in writing. Most participants also reported that they do not stop after each sentence when writing but instead, are more likely to stop after a few sentences. Although this may not be a reliable indicator of writing fluency, the employment of this strategy suggests that participants were not struggling at the word level but rather at the sentence level when composing. With regard to the use of L1 at the drafting stage, it was found that quite a number of participants would write in L1 when unable to find a word in English. However, a majority of participants reported that they do not write bits of text in the L1. Overall, this finding implies that participants in this study would only resort to using L1 if they fail to find an English word. It is also concluded that writing bits of text in L1 is not a strategy that they freely employ.

At the revising stage, more frequent strategies employed by participants were *hand in after reading* and *make changes in the sentence structure*. The employment of the first strategy is not surprising as most participants were taught to read through their essays before submission. It is important to note that participants were less likely to make changes in the structure of the whole essay. This seems to suggest that they were mostly concerned with the surface structure of the essay and do not edit the essays at a global level.

Overall, the findings resulting from Research Question 2 revealed a few key findings. First of all, it was found that L1 use during the pre-writing was minimal.

Secondly, participants would only use L1 during the drafting stage when they fail to find an appropriate word in English. These data thus appear to provide evidence that, contrary to the findings of Jones & Tetroe (1987) the majority of ESL students in this context, who are grouped as intermediate writers do not use much of their L1 to plan their writing for text generation.

Research Question 3 arguably led to the most interesting result, with certain writing strategies correlating significantly with interest in writing in English. It was found that those who like writing in English were more likely to prepare a mental plan than those who did not. This finding implies that students who like writing in English were more likely to approach a task in a more organized manner, taking it more seriously than those who do not like writing in English. This is an interesting finding as this particular strategy is normally employed by skilled writers. As Skibniewski and Skibniweska (1986 cited in Leki *et al.*, 2008) stated, more skilled L2 writers had preconceived plans when writing. Contrastively, the participants in the present study are not skilled writers and yet they too apply this strategy when writing.

As for Research Question 4, it was found that interest in writing in English had a negative correlation with the strategy of writing bits of text in the native language. This suggests that writing attitude may be associated with the frequency of L1 use in writing. Although not a definitive finding, a possible explanation is that subjects who are interested in writing in English are inclined to practice using the target language and use it extensively than those who have no interest in the activity. Having said that, more research on this topic needs to be undertaken before the association between writing attitude and L1 use is more clearly understood.

### **3.8 Research Limitations**

Some limitations of the present research design should also be addressed. First of all, the sample size for this study was relatively small, so the findings might not be transferable to other contexts or situations. This study investigated strategies used by 23 lower intermediate ESL learners in a specific context and categorized them into 3 categories; pre-writing, drafting and revising strategies. To enrich our understanding of writing strategy use, more individuals need to be included in the next study. A larger sample would provide more generalisability across contexts and this might yield different results which could help inform the literature about the predictors of L2 writing.

Another constraint that emerged in the study was insufficient time. Although the argumentative essay prompt was deemed appropriate, the time allotted proved to be insufficient. As shown in the results section, participants' essay production was limited in terms of length and variability. Due to this, their essays could not be marked based on the Jacobs Scale (1981). Therefore, it was concluded that more time should be assigned for the writing task so that the essays could be assessed analytically. In terms of instrumentation, the study revealed that the questionnaire being used have adequately operationalised the variables measured. Although the questionnaire was valid and reliable, some revisions for improvement were made to ensure that the research questions set out in this thesis could be answered. Feedback from participants and careful observations done during the study have provided significant insights as to what items in the questionnaire needed to be revised or removed. This was to insure that participants in Study 2 would not have difficulty answering the questions. Removal of items in the questionnaire was based on these justifications: (i) statements were

ambiguous or confusing for students and (ii) statements were irrelevant to the nature of the study.

### **3.9 Research Implications**

Several implications for improvement of measures arise from this study. One implication is that revisions and changes to the questionnaire are necessary in order to suit the context of the research and learners' level of understanding. For this purpose, revision of items in the questionnaire as discussed in the result section was carried out in Study 2. Aside from that, changes in the L2 proficiency measures were also revised. In this study, a vocabulary test and a naming task were used to tap learners' L2 proficiency. As shown in the findings, the vocabulary test used in the present study proved to not be as challenging as expected for the participants. Additionally, the use of only one test to assess students' vocabulary size may not be sufficient to reveal their vocabulary knowledge. Therefore, changes to the complexity and/ or levels of the vocabulary measure were considered. The suggestion for Study 2 was to employ three vocabulary level tests (VLT) taken from Nation (1993). The employment of several tests in the same format which ranged from easy to difficult was deemed more appropriate and practical for the context of the current work. Therefore, it was decided that the naming task be removed from Studies 2 and 3 in order to maintain the consistency of L2 proficiency measure.

In addition, Study 2 would explore further the relationship between writing performance and affective factors, particularly writing attitude. Overall, the new research questions included: (a) What is the relationship between writing attitude and writing performance? (b) Which stage of the writing process do L2 writers find most

difficult to carry out? (c) What is the relationship between interest in writing and writing performance in L2? (d) What is the relationship between writing block and writing L2 writing performance? These questions were considered and included in Study 2 of this thesis.



## CHAPTER FOUR

# INDIVIDUAL FACTORS OF WRITING PERFORMANCE: A STUDY IN NEW ZEALAND

### 4.1 Introduction

The primary goal of Study 2 was to test the research questions that relate to second language writing process, the relationships between ESL students' L2 proficiency and writing achievement and other factors in writing performance such as writing attitude and writing errors.

#### 4.1.1 *Research Questions*

- (i) Which activity in the L2 composing processes (planning, drafting and revising) do learners find most difficult to carry out?
- (ii) What is the main factor that stops learners when they are writing?
- (iii) What is the relationship between L2 writing strategies and writing performance?
- (iv) What is the relationship between L2 proficiency and writing performance?
- (v) What is the relationship between writing attitude and writing performance?
- (vi) What is the relationship between writing block and writing performance?

- (vii) What is the relationship between writing errors and writing performance?
- (viii) What is the relationship between L2 proficiency and writing errors?
- (ix) What is the relationship between L2 proficiency, text length and TTR?

## **4.2 Methodology**

### ***4.2.1 Selection of Participants***

The data for this study were collected from students enrolled in two institutions, in Christchurch, New Zealand in 2010. The target population of this study is adult ESL learners of academic English. ESL learners at the tertiary level education were considered for sampling because a lot of literature investigated this group of people and academic writing is important for tertiary studies. In addition, the samples are all adult ESL students, learning English for academic purposes and had obtained a certain degree of proficiency before enrolling in their course programmes. Participants in Group 1 were 41 undergraduates who were taking an intermediate English course at a language college in New Zealand. Before they were grouped in the intermediate level, they had to sit for a placement test to determine the appropriate courses for them. All of the students were studying towards International English Language Test (IELTS). Participants in Group 2 were 18 undergraduates who were also taking an English course at a private language college in New Zealand. All of them were in the Upper Intermediate Class. Before they were grouped in their respective classes, they had to sit for a placement test to determine the appropriate courses for them.

#### 4.2.2 Instrumentation

The data for this study were collected using a series of tests, which comprised a) timed essay in English, b) a jigsaw reading task c) a writing strategies questionnaire and d) vocabulary tests. This section provides a detailed description of the instruments used in this study, the rationale for choosing these measures and the development of these instruments.

##### Timed-essay in L2

In this study, a timed-essay was used as a measure of writing performance. Participants were given 30 minutes each to write an essay in English and they were asked to write as many words as they could. The prompt was taken from TOEFL Test of Written English (TWE) writing prompts (ETS, n.d.) Several prompts were considered and after careful deliberation, the following prompts were used in the final data collection:

*Group X: Many students choose to attend schools or universities outside their home countries. Why do some students study abroad?*

*Group Y: Some people believe that college students should be required to attend classes. Others believe that going to classes should be optional to students. Which point of view do you agree with?*

The rationale for selecting these prompts as a measure for writing performance was based on several factors. First, the timed-test format was chosen because it is one of the most efficient methods of assessing writing ability. As East (2007) states, timed test is

often used in large-scale L2 writing assessments because it is considered to provide reliable measurement. East (2007) adds, the timed test provides a controlled, practical and efficient opportunity to measure a wide variety of writing samples. Second, the topic chosen for this study was suitable for the participants as it showed no bias towards any particular culture and the subject matter was something that most tertiary students could relate to. The two topics were believed to be closely related to the participants' life as college students and therefore it was hoped that the participants would find it relatively easy to write about them. Third, the genre of argumentative essay was employed because it is believed that the ability to generate and organize ideas with examples for this type of writing involves complex cognitive functions (Hale et al, 1996). Additionally, argumentative essay writing is also one of the common essay genres college students may encounter across the curriculum.

### Jigsaw Reading Task

In this activity, a text is split into 5 parts (see Appendix I & J). The participants were required to put the story together by finding the clues and reflecting on clauses, conjunctions and textual organization. For the convenience of the researcher, participants were required to arrange the jumbled-up paragraphs/ parts according to the correct headings; Introduction, Body of paragraph 1, Body of paragraph 2, Body of paragraph 3, Body of paragraph 4 and Conclusion. The rationales of using this task were to test participants' understanding of textual organization and measure their ability to organize paragraphs coherently. According to Klapper and Rees (2003), jigsaw reading involves putting together in meaningful order excerpts of the same text and lends itself to teaching text organization. This is an important aspect of writing and this

skill is included in their current English programme syllabus (Study Skills Course, 2006).

### Writing Strategies Questionnaire

Writing strategies in this study are defined as actions or behaviours carried out by the participants in completing timed essay writing task as reported in the questionnaire. This means that this study centres on participants' perceptions of the writing strategies they employ during the writing process, rather than direct observations of what they did in the writing process. The questionnaire was sourced from Petric and Czarl (2003) who validated a writing strategies questionnaire. Based on findings in Study 1 of this thesis, the instrument was revised and adapted.

For the current study, there are two versions of this instrument, catered specifically for Group X and Group Y. The questionnaire for Group X consisted of 2 sections. The first section included six items asking participants' demographic characteristics (e.g. gender and age), relevant language background (e.g. length of time studying English and exposure to English course before enrolling in the current programme) participants' self assessment of L2 writing ability (statement: I am good in writing) and participants' interest in L2 writing (statement: I like writing in English). The second part of the questionnaire contains three subsections which comprised 36 items altogether. The first 6 items cover the strategies used the pre-writing stage, the subsequent 14 items relate to strategies used during the drafting stage and the third last 16 items relate to strategies used in the revising stage. Participants were asked to rate each statement on a five-point scale indicating 1 (never or almost never true of me), 2 (usually not true of me-less than half of the time), 3 (somewhat true of me-about half of

the time), 4 (usually true of me-more than half of the time) and 5 (always or almost always true of me). The complete questionnaire is shown in Appendix L.

The questionnaire used for Group Y had a slightly different version from the one used for Group X. Section one of the questionnaire included 6 items asking participants' demographic characteristics, which was similar to the questionnaire used for Group X. The second section of the questionnaire contained 10 new items pertaining to writing attitude and writing block. The items were taken from Rose's (1984) Writing Attitude Questionnaire (WAQ) and the Daly-Miller Writing Attitude Questionnaire (WAT) adapted by Gungle and Taylor (1989). Six items from Daly-Miller's WAT aimed at examining writing apprehension were included in the questionnaire. One with a positive polarity and the other with a negative polarity, scored on a 5-point Likert scale. Another 4 items were taken from Rose's WAQ which was meant to tap information regarding writer's block. The third part of the questionnaire comprised the same 36 items used for Group X. These were items used to measure participants' writing strategies (see Appendix M).

### Vocabulary Size Test

In this study, a series of vocabulary tests were used as a measure of L2 proficiency. As Laufer and Goldstein (2004) point out, L2 vocabulary has been regarded as one of the best single predictors of L2 proficiency and is considered an important aspect in the evaluation of the writing quality (Nation, 2001). For the present study, receptive vocabulary tests were used to indicate participants' level of L2 proficiency as it has been said that receptive knowledge precedes productive knowledge and use of vocabulary (Meara; 1996; Laufer 1988). Three receptive vocabulary level tests (VLT)

developed by Nation (1999) were used to measure participants' vocabulary size. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the VLT can be regarded as a reliable and valid instrument to measure vocabulary size as it has often been used by researchers to estimate the vocabulary size of non-English speaking learners (Read, 2000). In addition, Meara (1996) has claimed that the VLT is "the nearest thing we have to a standard test in vocabulary".

Each vocabulary test consisted of 10 questions and each question tested 3 different target words presented in the left column of a test booklet. In the right column were five different definitions for the target words. Of the 5, 2 of them were distracters. Participants were to choose the best meaning for each target word in the items by matching them to the correct definitions. The test was printed on a 3-page single-sided test booklet. Participants were instructed to record all their answers on the booklet for easy scoring. The total marks for each test was 30 (see Appendix K).

### Writing Assessment Measurement

#### *i. Analytic rating scale*

In this study, participants' essay responses were rated analytically, using the ESL Composition Profile designed by Jacobs *et al.* (1981) (see Appendix H). This scoring guide has become very popular since its publication in 1981 (Farvardin and Zare-ee, 2009 in Alsamadani, 2010). The Profile consists of five component scales, each focusing on an important aspect of composition and weighted according to its approximate importance. The scales in the Profile are *Content*, *Language*, *Vocabulary*, *Language* and *Mechanics*. Content accounts for 30%, organisation, language and vocabulary for 20% each, and mechanics for 10%. The total weight for each component

is further broken down into numerical ranges that differentiate four levels of mastery; excellent to very good, good to average, fair to poor and very poor. The maximum possible scores that participants may achieve is 100 and the minimum is 34. Assessment was done by two raters who both had a background in Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL). Each composition was read and scored independently by the raters. In all cases, if a disparity of more than 10 points was found between the scores assigned by the raters, they would sit down together and moderate their marks.

*ii. Analysis of errors*

In addition to assessing participants' written essay using an analytic rating scale, all written samples were also transcribed into a computer database according to Systematic Analysis of Language Transcript conventions (SALT, Miller & Chapman, 2001). Since SALT was originally designed as an oral language analysis tool, a number of codes were utilised to ensure that the variables measured reflected the important features of L2 writing. Altogether 11 variables were identified. These variables include total number of words produced, lexical diversity measured using type/token ratio and writing errors which included wrongly added word or morpheme, subject-verb agreement, tenses error and sentence error. The codes and description for these variables are outlined in Table 7.



**Table 7. Writing variables in SALT Analysis**

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Code</b>	<b>Descriptions</b>
Lexical diversity	TTR	Total number of words produced/ total number of words
Total words	TW	Total number of words produced
Addition	Add	Wrongly added word or morpheme e.g.: The last reason is teachers have a better knowledge and have[Add] qualifications that can be trusted.
Pronoun Error	EP	Wrong use of pronoun e.g.: As teachers, their[EP:they] know how to make the learning process become more interesting and easy to understand.
Word error	EW	Wrong use of word form/ word choice e.g.: Learning by[EW:with] teacher is better than learning by yourself.
Spelling	SP	Number of words spelled incorrectly e.g.: They could be a canselor[sp:counselor] for a student.
Subject verb agreement	SV	Subject verb agreement errors e.g.: In school, teachers is[SV:are] like our second parents.
Tenses	T	Wrong use of tenses e.g.: The teacher will give an assignment that will developed [T:develop] a student's learning skill
Word order	WO	Violation of word order in a sentence e.g.: There are many formula/*s math [wo].
Sentence error	EU	Errors made at the sentence level e.g.: Some people also can ask or prefer their teacher if have problem/*s or can/not understand about their study [eu].

## Description of writing variables in SALT Analysis

### *Text Length*

Text length was the number of words produced in writing by the participants. This variable has been widely used in various studies to measure productivity in both spoken and written language (Mackie & Dockrell, 2004; Nelson, Bahr, & Van Meter, 2004; Nelson & Van Meter).

### *Lexical diversity*

In this study, the range of lexical items which a participant used in completing the written task was taken as an approximate indication of the diversity of the participants' vocabulary. The value, calculated automatically by SALT, was generated by dividing the number of different words by the total number of words produced (TTR). This was done so that comparison between participants was possible. Scores ranged from 0 to 1. A high score means large diversity and a low score means little diversity. Number of different words produced is a widely used measure of lexical diversity (e.g. Nelson & Van Meter, 2002; Nelson *et al.*, 2004) and it is measured using the 'Type/Token Ratio' (TTR).

### *Writing errors*

One of the aims of the current study was to identify the types of writing errors prevalent among L2 writers. Previous research findings have revealed that text written by L2 students are generally shorter, less fluent and contain more errors compared to L1 writers (Purves, 1988). Error Analysis is a type of linguistic analysis that focuses on the

errors learners make. As such, eight types of writing errors (out of 11 writing variables) were established and analysed. The analysis was based on the literature of Error Analysis established by Corder (1974) and Richards (1974). Based on the literature, the taxonomy for Error Analysis includes the following categories:

1. Grammatical (preposition, articles, reported speech, singular and plural, adjectives, relative clauses, irregular verbs, tenses and possessive case)
2. Syntactic (coordination, sentence structure, nouns and pronouns, and word order)
3. Lexical (word choice)
4. Semantic (mechanics: punctuation and capitalization, and spelling)

It was not feasible to cover all subcategories of errors in this study. Therefore, only eight errors which were hypothesized to have an impact on L2 writing within the context of the current study were analysed. The percentages for each of these errors was calculated by dividing the number of errors made by the total number of words produced and then multiply that value by 100. All written samples were transcribed into SALT by the author.

#### ***4.2.3 Data Collection Procedures***

The data collection for Group 1 was conducted in February 2009 at a private language college in Christchurch, New Zealand. The process began with a formal meeting with the academic administrator to seek approval and permission to conduct research in the institution. Information sheets for Academic Coordinator and Tutor were given to the administrator during this meeting. After permission was sought, ESL

students from the intermediate group were selected randomly to be the participants of the study. Following this, a meeting with the course tutors was carried out to ascertain the dates for the actual data collection sessions. The agenda of the meeting also includes data collection procedure and the signing of a consent form.

The first session of data collection included the administration of a self-report questionnaire and vocabulary tests. Both the questionnaire and vocabulary test were administered to participants at their respective classes based on a schedule. Participants were given 60 minutes to complete both tasks. The second session of the data collection included the administration of a writing test in a timed-essay format. Participants were asked to write a composition in English and were given 60 minutes to complete the written test with paper and pen. There was no word limit and, therefore, students were free to write as much as they wanted. All participants in this study were provided with an explanation of the researcher's purpose of the study and the intended outcome of the research process. Each participant was guaranteed anonymity and assured that his/ her feedback would be kept confidential. Participants were also provided with the assurance that the option to withdraw from the research process at any time was afforded.

Data collection for Group Y was conducted in the month of May 2009 at the same private English college. Similar procedures which were carried out in Group X were employed in Group Y. Initially, 30 participants took part in the study after signing a consent form. However, during the administration of the writing test, 12 participants refused to give their full cooperation and eventually decided to withdraw from the study. Due to this, the number of participants in Group Y was reduced to 18.

#### **4.2.4 Data Analysis**

Quantitative analysis of the data included numerical ratings obtained from the Writing Strategy Questionnaire. Responses ranging from 1- 5 were input into SPSS 18.0 for each of the respondents along with their demographic data. Data were analysed by using SPSS 18.0 programme to run statistical tests. Tests of statistical analysis were performed to determine theory validation. The frequency of responses to items in Section 2 and 3 of the questionnaire was displayed using descriptive statistics and tables. A table showing the demographic breakdown of the sample was obtained from the SPSS programme. Inferential analysis was performed between items in the questionnaire and participants' essay scores to determine the relationship between variables.

An analysis of participants' written transcripts was also done using a language sampling tool called Systematic Analysis of Language Transcripts (SALT). Although SALT is commonly used to determine program intervention strategies and monitor student progress in language production, it is also a useful tool for identifying errors in written production. In this study, this software was used as a tool to assess written errors in the writing samples.

### 4.3 Results

#### 4.3.1 *Demographic information and characteristics of the participants*

Table 8 presents the characteristics of participants in Study 2. As can be seen, a majority of the participants in both groups were female. The native languages spoken within both groups were Chinese, Korean, Japanese, Thai, Arabic and Italian. The main language spoken within Group X was Korean and within Group Y, Chinese. As for number of years studying English, findings revealed that a majority of participants in Group X had spent 8 and more years studying English whereas most participants in Group Y had spent between 4 years and above studying English. In terms of exposure to writing courses, it was found that most participants in Group X did not attend any course in writing before enrolling in the college. For Group Y, the score for those who attended, and did not attend was even.

**Table 8. Characteristics of participants in Study 2**

		<b>Group X</b>		<b>Group Y</b>	
		<b>Number</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>%</b>
Gender	Male	12	29.3	7	38.9
	Female	19	70.7	11	61.1
Native language	Chinese	10	24.4	5	27.8
	Korean	24	58.5	4	22.2
	Japanese	2	4.9	4	22.2
	Thai	2	4.9	2	11.1
	Arabic	2	4.9	2	11.1
	Italian	1	2.4	1	5.6
Years studying English	1-11 months	12	29.3	1	5.6
	1-3 years	0	0	1	5.6
	4-7 years	6	14.6	8	44.4
	8 years and above	21	51.2	8	44.4
	Ambiguous	2	4.9	0	0
	Attended a course in writing before enrolling in the university	Yes	15	36.6	9
No		26	63.4	9	<b>50</b>

#### **4.3.2 Interest in Writing**

Table 9 outlines the self-evaluation of participants' interest in writing English essays. As presented, a majority of participants in both groups like writing in English. Only a minority number of students indicated that they do not like writing in English.

**Table 9.** Interest in writing in English as perceived by the participants

	<b>Group X</b>		<b>Group Y</b>	
	<b>Number</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>%</b>
I don't like it at all	1	2.4	0	0
I don't like it	9	22	2	11.10
I have no feeling about it	7	17.1	4	22.2
I like it	22	<b>53.7</b>	9	<b>50.0</b>
I like it a lot	2	4.9	3	16.7

#### **4.3.3 Writing Attitude**

In addition to interest in writing in English, the current study also investigated participants' self-perceived writing attitude in English. Table 10 presents the descriptive analysis for writing attitude of participants in Group Y. As can be seen, most participants almost always feel that their writing looks bad in comparison to what their teachers have seen. Similarly, participants themselves always feel that their writing does not match up to other good writings that they have seen. Further evidence of lack of confidence in writing is found when only a small number of participants feel that their writing is good. Surprisingly, very few participants feel that writing was an unpleasant experience for them. Overall, it can be concluded that most participants in Group Y do not perceive themselves as possessing good writing ability or able to write as well as other good students.



**Table 10. Descriptive analysis of writing attitude for Group Y**

	Almost Always	Often	Sometimes	Occasionally	Almost Never
	%	%	%	%	%
My teachers have seen good writing that my writing looks bad by comparison	33.3	11.1	27.8	16.7	11.1
I've seen good writing but mine doesn't match up	33.3	38.9	22.2	5.6	0
I think my writing is good	0	5.6	33.3	27.8	33.3
My instructors react positively to my writing	5.6	38.9	44.4	11.1	0
Writing is a very unpleasant experience for me	5.6	5.6	16.7	33.3	38.9

#### 4.3.4 Writing Block

Table 11 presents a descriptive analysis of participants' writing block when writing in English. As can be seen, a relatively high number of participants experience instances of writing block when writing English essays. With regard to the first descriptor, *Writing is difficult at times*, only a small number of participants (5%) answered *Almost Always*, while 27.8% of participants answered *Often*. With regard to the second descriptor, findings suggest that a large number of respondents (38.9%) often get stuck for an hour or more while writing. With regard to the third and fourth

descriptors, it was found that a relatively high number of participants (33.3%) often find it hard to write what they mean and that starting an essay is very hard for them.

**Table 11. Descriptive analysis of writing block for Group Y**

	<b>Almost Always</b>	<b>Often</b>	<b>Sometimes</b>	<b>Occasionally</b>	<b>Almost Never</b>
	%	%	%	%	%
Writing is difficult at times	5.6	27.8	33.3	16.7	16.7
While writing a paper, I get stuck for an hour or more	11.1	38.9	11.1	22.2	16.7
At times, I find it hard to write what I mean	11.1	33.3	33.3	11.1	11.1
Starting an essay is very hard for me	11.1	33.3	11.1	27.8	16.7

#### **4.3.5 Vocabulary Size and writing performance**

Table 12 presents the descriptive statistics of the vocabulary tests and writing tests for participants. As can be seen the scores for Vocabulary Test 1 for Group X ranged from 9 to 30, with a mean of 23.8 and a standard deviation of 5.93. For Vocabulary Test 2, scores ranged from 1 to 30, with a mean of 19.9 and a standard deviation of 7.32. These distributions suggest that the tests were not too difficult for this group of students given the relatively high mean scores and that some individuals

achieved maximum possible scores on the 2000 and 3000 level tests.

For Group Y, the scores for Vocabulary Test 1 ranged from 15 to 30, with a mean of 25.5 and a standard deviation of 4.31. For Vocabulary Test 2, scores ranged from 6 to 29, with a mean of 20.2 and a standard deviation of 6.1. For the third test, scores ranged from 6 to 28, with a mean of 17.2 and a standard deviation of 6.3. These distributions suggest that the tests were also not too difficult for this group of students given the relatively high mean scores and that some individuals achieved maximum possible scores on the 2000 level test.

**Table 12. Descriptive statistics for vocabulary tests and writing tests**

Measure	Group	Min.	Max.	Maximum	Mean	SD.
				possible score		
Vocabulary Test 1	1	9	30	30	23.8	5.93
	2	15	30	30	25.5	4.3
Vocabulary Test 2	1	1	30	30	19.9	7.32
	2	6	29	30	20.2	6.1
Vocabulary Test 3	2	6	28	30	17.2	6.3
Writing Test	1	45	84	100	63	10
	2	37	89	100	67.9	12.6

For Group X, scores given by the first rater ranged from 45 to 84 (out of 100), with a mean of 63 and a standard deviation of 10. Meanwhile, scores given by the second rater ranged from 45 to 87 (maximum 100), with a mean of 64 and a standard deviation of 11. The mode for the first rater was 55 and the second rater was 61. This

shows that a majority of students in this study did not get high scores in the writing task. The high standard deviation indicated that scores were not heavily clustered around the average. Because all other measures were compared to the writing scores, it was important to ascertain the extent of agreement among the raters. The reliability between raters was excellent ( $r = .942$ ). The high reliability between essay raters argues for confidence in their scores as measures of the quality of writing. Therefore, comparisons of these writing scores with other quantitative measures were warranted.

For Group Y, scores given by the first rater ranged from 37 to 89 (out of 100), with a mean of 67.9 and a standard deviation of 12.6. Meanwhile, scores given by the second rater ranged from 37 to 90 (maximum 100), with a mean of 68 and a standard deviation of 12.1. The mode for the first rater was 77 and the second rater was 71. This shows that most students in this study got average scores in the writing task. The high standard deviation indicated that scores were not heavily clustered around the average. The reliability between raters was excellent ( $r = .974$ ). Once again, the high reliability between essay raters argues for confidence in their scores as measures of the quality of writing. Therefore, comparisons of these writing scores with other quantitative measures were warranted.

#### ***4.3.6 Analyses of variables***

*Research Question 1: Which activity in the L2 composing processes do learners find most difficult to carry out?*

Participants in Group X reported that they found the activities in the Pre-writing Stage the most difficult to carry out. This was associated with the highest percentage of responses (58.5%). The Writing Stage was reported by a smaller percentage of

participants at 34.1% and the Revising Stage was reported by relatively few students, with only 7.3% reporting that this was the most difficult. This suggests that the majority of students in this study struggle with the activities in the pre-writing stage, a stage that is considered to involve brainstorming points to discuss, generating ideas and making an outline.

*Research Question 2: What is the main factor that stops students when they are writing?*

As shown in Table 13, the main factor that emerged in Group X was *I cannot find the right word or expression* with 41.5%. For participants in Group Y, the factor that interrupts participants' writing process was the need to reread one's essay to see if it is well-connected.

**Table 13.** Factors that interrupt participants' writing process

Factors	Group 1		Group 2	
	Number	%	Number	%
I have no ideas for my essay	14	34.1	4	22
I do not know how to spell a word	5	12.2	-	-
I cannot find the right expression	17	41.5	6	33.3
I need to reread to see the connection	5	12.2	8	44.4

*Research Question 3: What is the relationship between L2 writing strategies and writing performance?*

To determine the relationship between participants' writing strategies and writing performance, essay scores were correlated with strategy scores. For the purpose of this research, the analyses are presented based on the different stages of the writing process.

#### *Pre-Writing Stage*

Table 14 presents correlation between strategies in the pre writing stage and writing performance. For Group X, findings indicate that there is a trend for a relationship between the strategy *note down words related to the topic* and four out of five measures in writing, with the exception of mechanics. The overall positive relationship suggests that the employment of this strategy can potentially improve writing performance. However, there was no indication of a similar relationship in Group Y. As can be seen, for Group Y, there is a trend towards a relationship between the strategy *I only plan what to write in the first paragraph* and four out of five measures in writing. The overall negative relationship implies that the use of this strategy potentially decreases writing performance.

**Table 14. Correlation between Writing Scores and Pre Writing Strategies**

	Group X					Group Y				
	C	O	V	L	M	C	O	V	L	M
Look at a model essay	.155	.197	.134	.109	.214	-.092	-.043	.039	-.082	-.211
Think about ideas in L1	.103	.067	.208	.045	.105	.153	.123	.148	.153	.101
Note down words related to the topic	.202	.297	.266	.227	.086	.246	.173	.198	.092	.170
Write outline in L1	-.016	.041	.001	-.107	-.053	.069	.153	.066	.143	.186
Only plan what to write in the first paragraph	-.060	-.037	-.037	-.017	.015	-.283	-.351	-.201	-.087	-.128
Plan what to write in each paragraph	.145	.132	.196	.055	.129	.101	-.008	-.093	-.132	-.156

Note: C=Content, O=Organisation, V=Vocabulary, L=Language, M=Mechanics

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

### *Drafting Stage*

Table 15 presents the correlation between drafting strategies and writing performance for Group X. Out of fourteen drafting strategies in the measures; seven were found to be associated with writing performance. As can be seen, there is evidence of a relationship between the strategy *starting an essay with an introduction* and writing performance. The positive correlation here suggests that participants who apply this

strategy in writing are those who perform better in writing. In contrast, strategies of pausing either to reread what are written to get ideas or to pause to read after a few sentences were associated with lower writing performance. In terms of L1 use, findings indicate that there is a trend towards a relationship between the strategy *I write in L1 first and translate it to English later* and writing performance. The overall negative relationship suggests that the use of L1 and translation into L2 is associated with lower writing performance. As can be seen, there was also a trend towards a relationship between the strategy of *using a monolingual dictionary* and four out of five of the writing measures, with the exception of mechanics. The negative association suggests that the use of monolingual dictionary did not help learners in their writing performance. Similarly, there was also a trend towards a relationship between the strategy of performing constant grammar checks and writing performance. The overall negative relationship implies that constant grammar check was associated with lower scores in writing.



**Table 15. Correlation between writing scores and drafting strategies for Group X**

<b>Strategies</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>O</b>	<b>V</b>	<b>L</b>	<b>M</b>
Start with the introduction	.357*	.388*	.424**	.386*	.143
I stop to reread what has been written	-.247	-.248	-.117	-.256	-.044
Go back to outline to get ideas	-.116	-.102	-.112	-.256	-.008
Write bits of texts in L1	-.235	-.193	-.067	-.264	.067
Struggle with vocabulary and grammar	-.059	-.010	-.062	-.115	-.017
Stop to reread after a few sentences	-.234	-.224	-.149	-.288	-.070
I ask somebody to help when I have problems	-.162	-.207	-.111	-.243	.084
Write in L1 first and find an appropriate English word later	-.164	-.374*	-.251	-.263	.086
Stop writing to look up the word in the dictionary	.018	-.014	.091	.072	.111
Use a bilingual dictionary	-.047	.018	.021	-.057	.026
Use monolingual dictionary	-.218	-.101	-.207	-.284	-.008
Constantly check spelling and grammar	-.309*	-.169	-.177	-.240	-.137
Think about tutor's expectations	.061	.278	.244	.158	-.100

Note: C=Content, O=Organisation, V=Vocabulary, L=Language, M=Mechanics

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 16 outlines the correlation between drafting strategies and writing performance for Group Y. As can be seen, there is some evidence of a relationship between the strategy *start with the introduction* and writing performance. The positive relationship, although non-significant implies that using this strategy in writing potentially improves writing performance. In contrast, strategies that involved pausing such as *stopping to reread after each sentence* and *looking up words in the dictionary* appear as negative strategies. As can be seen, there is a trend towards a relationship between the two strategies mentioned and writing performance. In addition, there is also a trend towards a relationship between strategies involving dictionary use and writing performance.

The negative relationship suggests that using bilingual dictionaries is associated with a decrease in writing performance. In contrast, using a monolingual dictionary seems to increase writing performance. With regards to spelling and grammar concerns, findings revealed that there is some evidence of a relationship between the strategy of having constant grammar checks and writing performance. The negative relationship implies that, being too concerned with grammar and spelling at the drafting stage may potentially decrease writing performance.

**Table 16. Correlation between drafting strategies and writing performance for Group Y**

Strategies	C	O	V	L	M
Start with the introduction	.377	.238	.342	.311	.368
Reread what has been written	.109	.176	.213	.057	-.178
Go back to outline to get ideas	.051	.105	.134	.047	-.213
Write bits of texts in L1	-.128	.039	-.011	.122	.250
Struggle with vocabulary and grammar	-.309	-.152	-.176	-.006	-.211
Stop to reread after each sentence	-.368	-.233	-.258	-.225	-.400
Struggle with spelling	-.427	-.233	-.363	-.268	-.323
Stop to reread to see if points are connected	.169	.068	.152	.207	-.015
Write in L1 first and find an appropriate English word later	.044	.174	.068	.102	.099
If I don't know a word in English I look up the word in the dictionary	-.377	-.400	-.427	-.463	-.202
Use a bilingual dictionary	-.316	-.380	-.262	-.274	-.213
Use monolingual dictionary	.360	.396	.365	.425	.281
Constantly check spelling and grammar	-.608**	-.593**	-.601**	-.493*	-.534*
Think about tutor's expectations	-.140	-.251	-.216	-.178	-.335

Note: C=Content, O=Organisation, V=Vocabulary, L=Language, M=Mechanics

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

### *Revising Strategies*

Table 17 shows the correlation analysis between the writing performance and revising strategies. There were 14 revising strategies described in the questionnaire and seven were found to be associated with students' writing performance. As outlined in the result, there is a trend towards a relationship between the strategy *hand in a paper after reading it* and writing performance. The positive association suggests that as the use of this strategy increased, writing performance increased. In contrast, there were reasonably large but negative correlations between the strategy *focusing on one thing at a time* and writing performance. The negative relationship implies that the use of this strategy did not help in participants' writing performance. Further work may be necessary to determine the reasons for these different relationships; though they are discussed further in the discussion section.

Strategies that involved making changes, particularly by moving paragraphs around and making changes in content, were also associated with writing performance. As can be seen, there is evidence of a relationship between these strategies and four out of five of the writing measures, with the exception of mechanics. The overall negative relationship suggests that changes that involved restructuring essay and changing essay content are related to a decrease in writing performance. According to Leki et al (2008) textual restructuring (changes beyond the clausal level) was used by L2 writers for manipulation of coherence and stylistic concerns. It is argued that L2 writers who are capable of evaluating these areas in their essays are the expert or proficient writers, not intermediate level writers such as participants in this study. Therefore, one possible interpretation for this finding is that participants may not be skilful enough to execute

restructuring strategies due to their lack of L2 proficiency.

**Table 17. Correlation between Writing Scores and Revising Strategies for Group X**

Strategies	C	O	V	L	M
Read text aloud	-.231	-.169	-.127	-.168	.025
Read only after the whole paper is done	.096	.263	.179	.158	.190
Hand in paper after reading it	.137	.184	.262	.310*	.183
Make changes in vocabulary	.012	.027	-.011	-.171	.188
Make changes in sentence structure	-.147	-.132	-.057	-.217	.007
More paragraphs or sections around	-.363*	-.254	-.285	-.503**	-.093
Make changes in content or ideas	-.393*	-.269	-.289	-.387*	.004
Focus on one thing at a time	-.390*	-.405*	-.444**	-.432**	-.233
Show text to somebody	.032	-.023	-.026	-.047	.227
Check mistakes and try to learn from them	.352**	.291	.286	.239	.276
Focus more on spelling and grammar	-.053	-.034	-.145	-.279	.083
Focus more on the overall essay organization	.169	.232	.085	.143	.297
Focus more on the ideas presented	-.034	.049	-.017	-.047	-.082
Start writing a new draft if not happy with essay	-.009	-.049	-.017	.132	.172

Note: C=Content, O=Organisation, V=Vocabulary, L=Language, M=Mechanics

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 18 outlines the correlation between revising strategies and writing performance for Group Y. Out of 14 variables investigated, 6 were found to be associated with writing performance. As can be seen, there is evidence of a relationship between the strategy *I read my text aloud* and writing performance. The negative relationship indicates that as the use of this strategy increased, writing performance decreased. Findings also revealed that there is evidence of a relationship between the strategy *I hand in my paper after reading it* and writing performance. The negative association suggests that as the use of this strategy increased, writing performance decreased. It seems that the only positive strategy that emerged from this finding is the one that involves making changes in vocabulary. As can be seen, there is a trend towards a relationship between vocabulary changes and writing performance. The overall positive relationship, although non-significant, implies that the employment of this strategy can potentially increase writing performance.

In contrast, strategy that involves making changes beyond the sentence level seemed to be negatively associated to writing performance. As indicated in the results, there is some evidence of a relationship between the strategy *I move paragraphs or sections around* and writing performance. Apart from that, findings also revealed a trend towards a relationship between the strategy *I focus on one thing at a time* and writing performance. Similarly, there is also some evidence of a relationship between the strategy *I show my text to somebody* and writing performance. The negative association in these findings suggest that participants' employment of the three strategies was related to lower writing performance.

**Table 18. Correlation between Writing Scores and Revising Strategies for Group Y**

<b>Strategies</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>O</b>	<b>V</b>	<b>L</b>	<b>M</b>
Read text aloud	-.397	-.493*	-.397	-.390	-.343
Read only after the whole paper is done	-.138	-.147	-.153	-.190	-.306
Hand in paper after reading it	-.318	-.349	-.394	-.312	-.200
Make changes in vocabulary	.295	.252	.334	.432	.400
Make changes in sentence structure	-.095	.014	-.044	-.056	.072
More paragraphs or sections around	-.305	-.334	-.307	-.306	-.416
Make changes in content or ideas	.099	.102	.194	.346	.306
Focus on one thing at a time	-.382	-.386	-.337	-.377	-.447
Show text to somebody	-.427	-.368	-.375	-.286	-.132
Check mistakes and try to learn from them	.024	-.055	-.013	-.018	.098
Focus more on spelling and grammar	-.137	.027	-.036	-.048	-.158
Focus more on the overall essay organization	.185	.103	.069	-.046	-.206
Focus more on the points presented	.125	.125	.116	-.016	-.044
Start writing a new draft if not happy with essay	-.148	-.162	-.111	-.095	-.088

Note: C=Content, O=Organisation, V=Vocabulary, L=Language, M=Mechanics

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

*Research Question 4: What is the relationship between L2 proficiency and writing performance?*

In an effort to answer RQ4, participants' vocabulary test scores were correlated with essay scores. As outlined in Table 19, there is evidence of a relationship between vocabulary scores and writing performance for Group X. Although not all of the relationships were significant, the overall positive correlations suggest that the higher the vocabulary size, the higher the writing performance. Consistent results were found for Group Y. As can be seen, there is some evidence of a relationship between vocabulary size and writing performance. Once again, the positive correlation in the findings implies that as vocabulary size increased, writing performance increased too.

**Table 19. Correlation between vocabulary scores and essay scores**

	Group X		Group Y		
	Test 1	Test 2	Test 1	Test 2	Test 3
Content	.335*	.402*	.492*	.360	.414
Organisation	.205	.262	.342	.211	.322
Vocabulary	.165	.263	.410	.269	.331
Language	.231	.162	.279	.243	.203
Mechanics	-.042	.113	.206	.213	.136

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).



*Research Question 5: What is the relationship between writing attitude and writing performance?*

Table 20 shows the correlations found between writing attitude scores and writing performance. The literature indicated that higher writing apprehension correlated with lower quality of writing. Contrary to this finding, the current study found that one descriptor which reflects writing apprehension is associated to higher performance scores. As can be seen, there is a trend towards a positive relationship between the statement *My teachers have seen good writing that my writing must look bad by comparison* and writing performance. In contrast, another descriptor which also reflects writing apprehension correlated with lower writing performance. These findings seem contradictory; however one possible interpretation is that participants who see their teacher as a critical reader, who compares their writing to those of good writers, possess higher writing performance. This sounds reasonable as this can be seen as participants' sense of audience being related to the quality of their writing.

**Table 20. Correlation between writing attitude and writing performance**

Descriptor	Content	Organisation	Vocabulary	Language	Mechanics
My teachers have seen good writing that my writing must look bad by comparison	.396	.449	.408	.504*	.493*
I've seen good writing but mine doesn't match up	.035	-.115	-.068	-.049	.000
I think my writing is good	-.045	-.087	-.012	.044	-.014
My instructors react positively to my writing	-.126	-.121	-.131	-.197	-.243
Writing is an unpleasant task	-.202	-.117	-.112	-.107	-.023
Writing is difficult	-.242	-.230	-.253	-.186	-.228

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

*Research Question 6: Are writing blocks associated with writing performance?*

Table 21 presents the correlation between writing blocks and writing performance for Group Y. As can be seen, there is some evidence of a relationship between writing block indicators and writing performance. The overall negative relationship, although non-significant implies that learners with writing blocks may have lower writing performance compared to those not having writing blocks. This result differs from Lee (2002) study which found that writer's block was not associated with writing performance.

**Table 21. Correlation between writing blocks and writing performance**

<b>Writing attitude</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>O</b>	<b>V</b>	<b>L</b>	<b>M</b>
While writing a paper I get stuck for an hour or more	-.162	-.023	-.142	-.059	-.170
At times I find it hard to write what I mean	-.210	-.251	-.268	-.157	-.058
At times, my paragraph takes me over 2 hours to write	-.521*	-.282	-.427	-.290	-.173
Starting an essay is very hard for me	-.223	-.008	-.072	-.057	-.100

Note: C=Content, O=Organisation, V=Vocabulary, L=Language, M=Mechanics

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

*Research Question 7: What kind of writing error correlates with writing performance?*

A correlation analysis was performed to determine which error in writing was associated with writing performance. As can be seen in Table 22, there is evidence for a relationship between pronoun error and writing performance. The negative relationship indicates that as pronoun errors increased, writing performance scores decreased. A similar result was also found for word error. As can be seen, there is evidence of a relationship between writing performance and word errors. The overall negative

correlation suggests that as errors of words increased, writing performance decreased. Among all the errors listed, the one that correlated highest with writing performance was sentence error. The negative relationship implies that as sentence errors increased, writing performance decreased. Overall, it is concluded that pronoun, word and sentence errors are the most prevalent errors among participants in Group Y.

**Table 22. Correlations between writing performance and writing errors for Group Y**

	<b>C</b>	<b>O</b>	<b>V</b>	<b>L</b>	<b>M</b>
Added word/morpheme	-.054	-.055	-.092	.060	.049
Pronoun error	-.508**	-.526**	-.534**	-.521**	-.713**
Word error	-.486*	-.541*	-.530*	-.520*	-.758**
Spelling error	.000	-.100	-.015	-.079	.068
Subject-verb agreement error	-.299	-.166	-.214	-.024	-.124
Tenses error	-.087	-.106	-.033	.018	.077
Sentence error	.577*	-.330	-.555*	-.617**	-.604**
Word order error	.009	.000	-.059	-.172	-.011

Note: C=Content, O=Organisation, V=Vocabulary, L=Language, M=Mechanics

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

*Research Question 8: What is the relationship between L2 proficiency and writing errors?*

A correlation analysis was done to determine the interaction between L2 proficiency and writing errors. As can be seen in Table 23, there is some evidence of a relationship between addition errors and L2 proficiency. The negative association implies that as vocabulary size increased, addition errors are reduced. Pronoun, word and spelling errors also correlated with L2 proficiency, although at smaller magnitude. Findings also revealed a strong evidence of a relationship between subject verb agreement errors and vocabulary scores. The overall negative relationship implies that higher vocabulary size is related to reduced subject verb agreement errors. In addition, findings also revealed that there is evidence of a negative relationship between sentence errors and vocabulary scores. Overall, vocabulary scores correlated most highly with word omission errors. The negative relationship implies that as vocabulary size increased, word omission errors decreased.

**Table 23. Correlations between L2 proficiency and writing errors for Group A**

	Vocabulary Test 1	Vocabulary Test 2	Vocabulary Test 3
Addition error	-.481*	-.315	-.245
Pronoun error	-.213	-.255	-.124
Word error	-.186	-.339	-.350
Spelling error	.310	.266	.100
Subject Verb Agreement error	-.736**	-.581**	-.454
Tenses error	-.154	-.143	-.093
Sentence error	-.503**	-.498*	-.199
Word order error	.273	.284	.310
Word Omission	-.732**	-.616**	-.405**
Morpheme Omission	-.582*	-.452	-.310

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

#### 4.4 Discussion

One of the aims of the present study was to investigate the association between writing process strategies and writing performance. In addition, the study also aims to discover the factors that promote or hinder L2 writers' writing performance. In terms of difficulty of the different stages in writing, a majority of respondents found that activities in the Pre Writing Stage were the most difficult to carry out, despite less actual writing being required during this stage and the focus being on brainstorming of ideas. With regards to this finding, it is assumed that L2 writers in this context have limited pre-writing techniques that would otherwise enabled them to come up with good, relevant content for their essays. What is surprising is that a majority of respondents reported that they like writing in English. Despite having the interest in writing in English, the students were not able to achieve high scores in the writing task.

The data in this study has shown increase in L2 proficiency may promote better writing performance. In addition, the role of L2 proficiency was also established in the use of strategies. On the other hand, factors such as insufficient L2 proficiency skills may hinder L2 writers' writing process in the sense that they are not able to execute effective strategies in writing. Considering the strategies referred to in the questionnaire, those that involved stopping writing/revision to check spelling or grammar, to find a word or to review structure or content were negatively correlated with writing quality. Similarly, a study by Skibniewski & Skibniewska (1986 in Leki 2008) reported that frequent use of dictionary when writing in L2 was related to a greater number of stops during the writing process. According to Yau (1991), L2 writers concentrate on their spelling and grammatical choices during the writing process. Without adequate language skills, higher level processes in writing cannot be properly implemented and

L2 writers will be less efficient in L2 writing tasks than in L1 ones (Jones & Tetroe, 1987; Yau, 1991). Leki (2008) makes the similar point that skilled writers are less concerned with surface features of the text (i.e., spelling and grammar) compared to less skilled writers. Being in an-intermediate class, the participants in this study were not skilled writers and, therefore, were limited by their lack of language skills. This conclusion is consistent with the evidence in the present study for relationships between these stopping or surface-level strategies and English vocabulary levels. As stated by Pennington & So (1993), L2 proficiency is a major factor in determining L2 writing quality.

The finding in the work also supports Santos' (1988) study which stated that vocabulary and lexical selections do enter into the judgment of L2 writing. According to Santos, the use of a wrong word often shrouds the meaning of a text and results in a negative judgment by an impartial reader. From this finding, we can assume that by increasing students' vocabulary knowledge, they might be able to write better essays and get higher scores in writing. With regard to L1 use, the results in this study support the notion that L1 interference relate to writing performance. As Myles (2002) suggested, a writer's first language plays an important role in second language acquisition. Research has also shown that language learners sometimes use their native language in L2 writing when generating ideas and attending to details (Friedlander, 1990). Therefore, the findings in this study argue for the relevance of L1 interference in the use of strategies. More positive strategies reported in this study were *starting essay with an introduction, hand in paper after reading* and *checking mistakes and learn from them*. The use of the first positive strategy suggests that students who are able to apply the organisation skills in essay writing will be able to get higher marks in their essay.



Meanwhile the use of the latter strategy implies that students who check their writing mistakes and try to learn from them help play a role in their L2 writing quality.

The results of this study also underscore the need for further examination of the role of writing attitude in writing performance. Due to time restrictions of participants' availability, a more conclusive finding could not be gathered as the sample size involved in the writing attitude analysis was fairly small. Therefore, continued research covering a bigger sample would be considered in the next study.

#### **4.5 Conclusions**

The most obvious conclusion to emerge from this study is that L2 proficiency, particular vocabulary size, can be a reliable predictor of good writing. The findings from the present study also argue for the relevance of L2 proficiency in ESL writing instructions. In addition, the results also pointed out that certain writing strategies, which may be effective for certain group of L2 writers, might not be as effective for others, for example *focus more on the overall essay organization* and constantly *check spelling and grammar*. One of the probable reasons for this is because of the students' poor L2 competence deters them from seeing the essay holistically. In order for ESL writers to perform better revising skills in writing, higher L2 competence should be acquired first.

In addition, the results argue for writing strategies related to surface level checking to be related to poor writing performance. These may not be strategies that can be avoided, since they may be necessary to reduce errors in writing. However, either reducing their use or reducing the need for their use would seem to be a profitable process for educators. In contrast, strategies that are more effective are starting essays

with an introduction, handing in papers after reading them and checking one's mistakes and trying to learn from them. Following the above discoveries, it is concluded that linguistic barriers in L2 affect both writing quality and students' ability to apply effective strategies in writing.

## **CHAPTER 5**

# **INDIVIDUAL FACTORS OF WRITING PERFORMANCE: A STUDY IN MALAYSIA**

### **5.1 Introduction**

The current study investigated the L2 proficiency level, writing attitude, writing errors and writing strategies of 109 Malaysian ESL learners studying at pre-degree programmes at a public university. The role of these variables in writing performance was explored by measuring the relationship between writing attitude scores, errors in writing, strategy use and essay scores. In addition, the role of L2 proficiency in writing performance was investigated by assessing the relationship between vocabulary size scores, writing errors and writing performance. Some of the research questions are repeated from Study 1 and 2 to allow for comparisons of findings between the three studies in this thesis. In doing so, an interesting comparison of the predictive variables in writing among ESL students in both the New Zealand and Malaysian settings can be made. Findings of this study will be discussed below. This is followed by the discussion and implications of the findings.

### **5.1.1 Research Questions**

- (i) Which activity in the L2 composing processes (planning, writing, and revising) do learners find most difficult to carry out?
- (ii) What is the main factor that stops learners when they are writing?
- (iii) What is the relationship between L2 writing strategies and writing performance?
- (iv) What is the relationship between L2 proficiency and writing performance?
- (v) What is the relationship between writing attitude and writing performance?
- (vi) What is the relationship between writing block and writing performance?
- (vii) What is the relationship between writing errors and writing performance?
- (viii) What is the relationship between L2 proficiency and writing errors?
- (ix) What is the relationship between L2 proficiency, text length and TTR?

## **5.2 Methodology**

### **5.2.1 Selection of Participants**

The data from the current study were collected from 109 students enrolled in a public university in Sabah, Malaysia in 2010. Before enrolling in the university, all of the participants would have learnt English for eleven years in primary and secondary schools. The target population of this study is adult ESL learners of English who are at pre-diploma and diploma levels. For the purpose of this research, participants in this study are labelled as Group A, B and C to represent the three different programme levels they belong to. Group A consisted of 39 participants and this cohort represented ESL learners who had the least amount of academic experience in tertiary level education. All participants in Group A were fresh school leavers, studying in their first semester pre-diploma programme. Group B consisted of 30 participants who were studying in their second semester course programme. This group had had three semesters of academic experience in tertiary level education and they had gone through two English proficiency courses before enrolling in their current programme. Group C consisted of 40 participants who had the most amount of academic experience in tertiary level education. In order to be in this level, they needed to pass four levels of English proficiency courses. The rationale of having three groups in this study is because they had different levels of academic experience and they had gone through different levels of English course programmes in the university.

### 5.2.2 Instrumentation

The data for this study were collected using a series of tests, which included a) timed essay in English, b) a writing strategies questionnaire and c) vocabulary tests. This section outlines the description of the said instruments and the rationale for choosing them.

#### Timed-essay in L2

Participants were given 60 minutes each to compose an essay in English. Similar to the instructions in Study 1 and 2, there was no word limit for this task and participants were free to write as much as they wanted. The prompt for this task was chosen from the TOEFL Test of Written English (TWE) writing prompts (ETS, n.d.) The selection of the topic was decided after careful consideration by the researcher. The following prompt was finally used in the data collection:

*Some people think they can learn better by themselves than with a teacher. Others think that it is always better to have a teacher. Which do you prefer? Use specific reasons to develop your essay.*

The rationale for selecting the prompt was similar to the one mentioned in Study 2. First, essay writing was considered the most efficient and most reliable way to assess writing performance and it is the common practice in large scale English tests. According to Farhady et. al (1994), writing essays gives the testees the opportunity to

display their ability to organise and communicate their own ideas, using their own vocabulary, register and style.

Second, the writing situation given to the participants was similar to the ones they normally encounter in their classes; in academic programmes which use essay exams frequently, where students are expected to write an essay within a single class period. In addition, participants in this study were familiar with timed impromptu writing tasks and were used to doing it in schools. The standardised English exams in the Malaysian secondary school such as the Lower Secondary Exam (LSE) and Higher Secondary Exam (HSE) both include timed impromptu writing task in the written exam.

Third, the topic chosen for this study was considered appropriate as it was something that the participants could relate to. The topic was closely related to their lives as university students and they could draw on their own experience to come up with the points for the essay. Fourth, the genre of argumentative essay was chosen to ensure consistency of instruments used across Study 2 and Study 3.

During the writing session, participants were given an explanation of the purpose of the study and the intended outcome of the research process. Each participant was guaranteed anonymity and confidentiality. Participants were also provided with the assurance that they could withdraw from the research process at any time.

### Writing Strategies Questionnaire

Writing strategies in this study are defined as actions or behaviours carried out by the participants in completing the timed essay writing task as reported in the questionnaire. This means that this study focuses on participants' perceptions of the

writing strategies they used in the writing process, rather than direct observations of what they did in the writing process.

Similar to Study 1 and study 2, the current study used a writing strategy questionnaire sourced from Petric and Czarl (2003). Some changes and revisions to the questionnaire were made to suit the aims of the current study. The questionnaire consisted of three parts. The first part included six items asking participants' demographic characteristics (e.g. gender and age), relevant language background (e.g. length of time studying English and exposure to English course before enrolling in the current programme

Part 2 of the questionnaire contained 10 items related to apprehension in L2 writing, writing attitude and writing block. The items were taken from Rose's (1984) Writing Attitude Questionnaire (WAQ) and Daly-Miller Writing Attitude Questionnaire (WAT) adapted by Gungle and Taylor (1989). Three items from Daly-Miller's WAT aimed at examining writing apprehension were included in the questionnaire. Two with a positive polarity and one with a negative polarity, scored on a 5-point Likert scale. The rest of the items were taken from Rose's WAQ aimed at examining writing attitude and writing block.

Part 3 of the questionnaire had three subsections which comprised 34 items altogether. The first section contained 6 items pertaining to strategies used in the pre-writing stage. The second section contained 14 items pertaining to strategies used during the drafting stage and the third section consisted of 14 items pertaining to strategies used in the revising stage. Participants were asked to rate each statement on a five-point scale indicating 1 (never or almost never true of me), 2 (usually not true of me-less than half of the time), 3 (somewhat true of me-about half of the time), 4



(usually true of me-more than half of the time) and 5 (always or almost always true of me). The complete questionnaire is shown in Appendix M.

### Vocabulary Size Test

Vocabulary is an essential component in any model of language competence and vocabulary size is believed to be a good indicator of a learner's linguistic knowledge. As Laufer and Goldstein (2004) have pointed out, L2 vocabulary has been regarded as one of the best single predictors of L2 proficiency. Therefore, in this study, three vocabulary size tests developed by Nation (1999) were used to measure participants' vocabulary size. The receptive vocabulary tests, namely the 2000, 3000 and 5000 level tests, each consisted of 10 questions. Each question tested 3 different target words presented in the left column. In the right column were five different definitions for the target words. Of the 5, 2 were distracters. Participants were supposed to choose the best meaning for each target word in the items by matching them to the correct definitions. The test was printed on a 3-page single-sided test booklet. Participants were instructed to record all their answers on the booklet for easy scoring. The total marks for each test was 30 (see Appendix K).

## Writing Assessment

### *i. Analytic rating scale*

Participants' essay responses were rated analytically, using the ESL Composition Profile designed by Jacobs *et al.* (1981). This scoring guide has become very popular since its publication in 1981 (Farvardin & Zare-ee, 2009 cited in Alsamadani, 2010). The Profile consists of five component scales, each focusing on an important aspect of composition and weighted according to its importance. The scales in the Profile are *Content*, *Language*, *Vocabulary*, *Language* and *Mechanics*. Content accounts for 30%, organisation, language and vocabulary for 20% each, and mechanics for 10%. The total weight for each component is further broken down into numerical ranges that differentiate four levels of mastery; excellent to very good, good to average, fair to poor and very poor. The maximum possible scores that participants may achieve is 100 and the minimum is 34. Assessment was done by two raters who both had a background in Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL). Each composition was read and scored independently by the raters. In all cases, if a disparity of more than 10 points was found between the scores assigned by the raters, they would sit down together and moderate the marks.

*i. Analysis of Errors*

Similar to Study 2, all written samples in Study 3 were also transcribed into a computer database according to Systematic Analysis of Language Transcript conventions (SALT, Miller & Chapman, 2001). This was done to ensure consistency across the two studies and discover prevalent writing errors among Malaysian students which may be L1 related. As mentioned in Chapter 4, SALT was originally designed as an oral language analysis tool, so a number of novel codes were utilised to ensure that the variables measured reflected the important features of students' writing in English as a second language. Eleven variables which included total number of words produced, lexical diversity and writing errors such as wrongly added word or morpheme, subject-verb agreement, tense error, pronoun error, word error, word order error, spelling error and sentence error were analysed.

Description of writing variables in SALT Analysis*Text Length*

Text length was the number of words produced in writing by the participants. This variable has been widely used in various studies to measure productivity in both spoken and written language (Mackie & Dockrell, 2004; Nelson, Bahr, & Van Meter, 2004; Nelson & Van Meter, 2002).

*Lexical diversity*

In this study, the range of lexical items which a participant used in completing the written task was taken as an approximate indication of the diversity of the

participants' vocabulary. The value, calculated automatically by SALT, was generated by dividing the number of different words by the total number of words produced (TTR). This was done so that comparison between participants was possible. Scores ranged from 0 to 1. A high score means large diversity and a low score means little diversity. Number of different words produced is a widely used measure of lexical diversity (e.g. Nelson & Wan Meter, 2002; Nelson *et al.*, 2004) and it is measured using the 'Type/Token Ratio' (TTR).

### Writing errors

One of the aims of the current study was to identify the types of writing errors prevalent among L2 writers. Previous research findings have revealed that text written by L2 students are generally shorter, less fluent and contain more errors compared to L1 writers (Purves, 1988). Error Analysis is a type of linguistic analysis that focuses on the errors learners make. As such, eight types of writing errors (out of 11 writing variables) were established and analysed. The analysis was based on the literature of Error Analysis established by Corder (1974) and Richards (1974). Based on the literature, the taxonomy for Error Analysis includes the following categories:

1. Grammatical (preposition, articles, reported speech, singular and plural, adjectives, relative clauses, irregular verbs, tenses and possessive case).
2. Syntactic (coordination, sentence structure, nouns and pronouns, and word order).
3. Lexical (word choice).
4. Semantic (mechanics: punctuation and capitalisation, and spelling).

It was not feasible to cover all subcategories of errors in this study. Therefore, only eight errors which were hypothesised to have an impact on L2 writing within the context of the current study were analysed. The percentages for each of these errors were calculated by dividing the number of errors made by the total number of words produced and then multiplying that value by 100.

### Transcription, Coding and Reliability

All written samples were transcribed into SALT by the author. The transcript was checked by a second examiner to ensure that all writing samples were correctly transcribed. After practice and establishing the coding guidelines, the author and a second examiner coded 20% of the written samples independently to obtain reliability. Analysis revealed that the ratings had an 88.6% of inter-rater reliability rate. This was deemed acceptable as any scoring discrepancies between the author and the second examiner were resolved by consensus.

### ***5.2.3 Data Collection Procedures***

The data collection for all three groups was conducted from mid August 2010 to the end of September 2010 at a public university in Sabah, Malaysia. The first step in the process involved a formal correspondence via email with the language coordinator to seek approval and permission to do the research in the university. After permission was sought, a proposed schedule for the data collection work was given to the language coordinator. In mid August 2010, the researcher met the language coordinator to identify the sample population and during the meeting, three groups of ESL students from three different cohorts were randomly selected to be the participants of the study.

This was followed up by a meeting with the course tutors to set up the time for actual data collection sessions. In the meeting, a cover letter explaining the study and a consent form was provided for the tutors.

Participants took a series of tests in two separate sessions. The first session of the data collection included the administration of a writing test to the participants. They were asked to write a composition in English and were given 60 minutes to complete the written test with paper and pen. There was no word limit and, therefore, participants were free to write as much as they wanted. The second session of data collection included the administration of a self-report questionnaire and a vocabulary test. Both the questionnaires and vocabulary test were administered to students at their respective classes on a designated date. Students were given 60 minutes to complete both tasks.

### **5.3 Results**

#### ***5.3.1 Demographic information and characteristics of participants in Study 3***

Table 24 presents the characteristics of participants in this study. The pool of participants consisted of 109 ESL students from 3 different course programmes. As can be seen, the majority of the participants in all three sample groups were female. The native languages spoken within the groups were Malay, Kadazan, Bajau and Bugis with the majority being Malay, the national language in Malaysia. Most of the participants (>70%) had not attended a course in writing before enrolling in the university.

**Table 24. Characteristics of participants in Study 3**

		Group A		Group B		Group C	
		Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Gender	Male	0	0	6	20.0	12	30.0
	Female	40	100	24	80.0	28	70.0
Native language	Malay	38	<b>95.0</b>	26	<b>86.7</b>	36	<b>90.0</b>
	Kadazan	2	5.0	4	13.3	0	0
	Bajau	0	0	0	0	3	7.5
	Bugis	0	0	0	0	1	2.5
Attended a course							
in writing before enrolling in the university	Yes	9	22.5	8	26.7	11	27.5
	No	31	<b>77.5</b>	21	<b>70.0</b>	29	<b>72.5</b>

### 5.3.2 *Writing attitude*

#### Interest in writing

Table 24 presents the self evaluation of participants' interest in writing. As can be seen, most participants in all three groups like having the chance to express their ideas in writing. However, when asked whether writing is a very unpleasant experience, mixed results were reported. A majority of participants in Group A (87.5%) answered Not Sure, whereas most participants in Group B and C answered Disagree. It is assumed that

participants in Group A were not clear with the statement which led them to answering Not Sure.

**Table 25. Self evaluation of participants' interest in writing**

Descriptor	Responses	Group A	Group B	Group C
		%	%	%
I like having the chance to express my ideas in writing	Strongly disagree	0	3.3	0
	Disagree	15.0	16.7	7.5
	Not Sure	22.5	13.3	30.0
	Agree	<b>52.5</b>	<b>53.3</b>	<b>47.5</b>
	Strongly agree	10.0	13.3	15.0
Writing is a very unpleasant experience	Strongly disagree	5.0	13.3	7.5
	Disagree	2.5	<b>40.0</b>	<b>37.5</b>
	Not Sure	<b>87.5</b>	20.0	32.5
	Agree	5.0	23.3	22.5
	Strongly agree	0	0	0



### Writing Confidence

Apart from interest in writing in English, participants were also asked to assess their writing confidence in English. This was measured through 4 items in the questionnaire and the responses are presented in Table 26. Overall, it was found that most participants in all three groups were not sure whether their lecturers liked their writing. Half of the participants in Group A reported they were not good at writing in English, whereas 40% of participants in Group B were unsure whether they were good in writing in English. In Group C, 35.0% of participants agreed that they were not good at writing in English. With regards to the statement *I feel confident in my ability to express ideas*; it was found that most participants in Groups A and B disagreed. In addition, 35.0% of participants in Group C were not sure with the statement. With regards to the statement *When I hand in my essay, I know I am going to do poorly*, it was found that 51.3% of participants in Group A agreed, whereas 43.3% of participants in Group B agreed. Similarly, 35.0% of participants in Group C also agreed with the statement. Overall, the results showed that most participants in all three groups do not have high self-esteem in their own writing ability.

**Table 26. Evaluation of participants' confidence in writing**

Statements	Group A					Group B					Group C				
	SD	D	NS	A	SA	SD	D	NS	A	SA	SD	D	NS	A	SA
I think my lecturers like my writing	5.0%	2.5%	<b>87.5%</b>	5.0%	0%	0%	10.0%	<b>86.7%</b>	3.3%	0%	0%	12.5%	<b>72.5%</b>	15.0%	0%
I am not good at writing in English	5.0%	2.0%	12.5%	<b>50.0%</b>	12.0%	0%	20.0%	<b>40.0%</b>	36.7%	3.3%	2.5%	20.0	32.5%	<b>35.0%</b>	10.0%
I feel confident in my ability to express ideas	20.0%	<b>50.0%</b>	25.0%	5.0%	0%	3.3%	<b>43.3%</b>	30.0%	23.3%	0%	5.0%	32.5%	<b>35.0%</b>	25.0%	2.5%
I do not think I write in English as well as my friends	2.6%	7.7%	<b>41.0%</b>	<b>41.0%</b>	7.7%	0%	13.3%	30.0%	<b>46.7%</b>	10.0%	5.0%	12.5%	22.5%	<b>45.0%</b>	15.0%
When I hand in my essay I know I am going to do poorly	2.6%	33.3%	10.3%	<b>51.3%</b>	2.6%	0%	40.0%	13.3%	<b>43.3%</b>	3.3%	5.0%	25.0%	27.5%	<b>35.0%</b>	7.5%

**Note: SD=Strong disagree; D=Disagree; NS=Not Sure; A=Agree; SA=Strongly Agree**

### Writing block

Table 27 presents self evaluation of participants' writing block in writing English essays. Overall it was found that one third (35%) of participants in Group A agreed that it takes them over an hour or more to write the first paragraph. However, 53.3% of participants in Group B and 40.0% of participants in Group C disagreed that it takes them over an hour or more to write the first paragraph. With regards to starting a paper, many participants across all three groups reported having this problem when writing. In addition, a majority of participants in all three groups also agreed that at times, they find it hard to write what they mean. Overall, these findings suggest that starting a paper in the initial stage of writing was a challenge for most of the participants across all three groups. Results also suggested that most participants find it hard to write what they mean when writing English essays. The only clear distinction in the results was the responses to the statement, "*My first paragraph takes me over an hour or more to write*". This particular statement was agreed mostly by participants in Group A but not Group B or C.

Table 27. Self evaluation of participants' writing block

Descriptor	Group A					Group B					Group C				
	SD	D	NS	A	SA	SD	D	NS	A	SA	SD	D	NS	A	SA
My first paragraph takes me over an hour or more to write	7.5%	32.5%	20.0%	<b>35.0%</b>	5.0%	13.3%	<b>53.3%</b>	10.0%	23.3%	0%	17.5%	<b>40.0%</b>	20.0%	20.0%	2.5%
Starting a paper is very hard for me	2.5%	25.0%	17.5%	<b>45.0%</b>	7.5%	0%	23.3%	26.7%	<b>46.7%</b>	3.3%	5.0%	25.0%	15.0%	<b>42.5%</b>	10.0%
At times I find it hard to write what I mean	2.5%	5.0%	10.0%	<b>67.5%</b>	12.5%	0%	26.7%	10.0%	<b>50.0%</b>	13.3%	2.5%	5.0%	25.0%	<b>52.5%</b>	15.0%

**Note: SD=Strong disagree; D=Disagree; NS=Not Sure; A=Agree; SA=Strongly Agree**

### 5.3.3 *Vocabulary size and Writing Performance*

Table 28 presents the descriptive statistics for the vocabulary tests and writing test. ANOVA tests followed by Scheffe Post-Hoc comparison were also performed to compare vocabulary and writing test scores among the three groups. As can be seen, the scores for Vocabulary Test 1 for Group A ranged from 7 to 30, with a mean of 19.7 and a standard deviation of 5.53. For Vocabulary Test 2, scores ranged from 2 to 30, with a mean of 13.7 and a standard deviation of 6.03. For Vocabulary test 3, the scores ranged from 5 to 27, with a mean of 12.7 and a standard deviation of 5.50. There was a ceiling effect for the first and second test but only one participant achieved the maximum possible score in both tests. This suggests that the tests were appropriate for the students as they have reasonable distributions around the mean.

For Group B, the scores for Vocabulary Test 1 ranged from 19 to 30, with a mean of 27.6 and a standard deviation of 2.33. For Vocabulary Test 2, scores ranged from 8 to 30, with a mean of 22.9 and a standard deviation of 5.78. For Vocabulary Test 3, the scores ranged from 13 to 28, with a mean of 22.6 and a standard deviation of 4.21. This suggests that the tests were appropriate for this group of students as they have reasonable distributions around the mean. Five individuals achieved the maximum possible scores on Vocabulary Test 1 and 2 but no individuals scored full marks in Vocabulary Test 3.

For Group C, scores for Vocabulary Test 1 ranged from 16 to 30, with a mean of 26.6 and a standard deviation of 3.35. For Vocabulary Test 2, scores ranged from 13 to 30, with a mean of 22.4 and a standard deviation of 4.59. For the Vocabulary Test 3, the scores ranged from 14 to 29, with a mean of 21.3 and a standard deviation of 3.9. Eight individuals achieved maximum possible scores in Vocabulary Test 1 but only one

individual scored full marks in Vocabulary Test 2. Meanwhile, no individuals scored full marks in Vocabulary Test 3.

Results from ANOVA tests revealed a significant result for Vocabulary Test 1, which indicated that Group A was significantly different from B and C. However, Group B and C were not different. Inspection of the means suggests that Group A achieved lower scores than the other two groups. For Vocabulary Test 2, once again there was a significant result which indicated that Group A was different from B and C. However, there was no significant difference between Groups B and C. Assessment of the means implies that Group A had lower receptive vocabulary size than the other two groups. For Vocabulary Test 3, tests revealed a significant result which showed that Group A was different from Group B and C. However, Groups B and C were not different. Inspection of the means suggests that Group A achieved significantly lower scores than the other two groups. Overall, these findings indicate that Group A had the least amount of L2 proficiency among the three sample groups, whereas Groups B and C were of a similar level.

In terms of writing performance, the test revealed a significant result which indicated that Group A was different from B and C. Inspection of the means indicated that writing performance for Group A was the lowest among the three sample groups. Although Group B appeared to have the best writing performance among the groups, there was no significant result which indicated that it was different than Group C.

Table 28. Descriptive statistics of vocabulary tests and writing tests

Measure	Group	Minimum	Maximum	Maximum possible score	Mean	SD	Anova			Scheffe Post Hoc ( <i>p</i> values)		
							F	Df	<i>p</i>	A vs B	A vs C	B vs C
Vocabulary Test 1	1	7	30	30	19.7	5.53						
	2	19	30	30	27.6	2.33	41.116	2,106	.000	.000	.000	.589
	3	16	30	30	26.6	3.35						
Vocabulary Test 2	1	2	30	30	13.7	6.03						
	2	8	30	30	22.9	5.78	33.673	2,106	.000	.000	.000	.933
	3	13	30	30	22.4	4.59						
Vocabulary Test 3	1	5	27	30	12.7	5.50						
	2	13	28	30	22.6	4.21	49.206	2,106	.000	.000	.000	.535
	3	14	29	30	21.3	3.9						
Writing Test	1	44	82	100	63.5	8.72						
	2	62	90	100	75.8	7.64	26.060	2,106	.000	.000	.000	.784
	3	57	88	100	74.4	7.39						

### 5.3.4 Analyses of variables

*Research question 1: Which activity in the L2 composing processes (planning, drafting, revising) do learners find most difficult to carry out?*

As can be seen in Table 29, it was found that participants in Group A found the activities in the writing stage the most difficult to carry out. This was reported by the highest percentage of responses (56%). This was followed by the pre-writing stage (35%) and the revising stage (7%). Similar to Group A, a majority of participants in Group B (50%) also reported that activities in the writing stage were the most difficult to carry out. This was followed by the pre-writing stage (40%) and revising stage with (2%). Meanwhile, a majority of participants in Group C (53%) found the Pre Writing stage the most difficult task to carry out.

**Table 29. Most difficult part of the writing process as perceived by participants**

<b>Group</b>	<b>Pre-Writing</b>	<b>Writing/ Drafting</b>	<b>Revising</b>
Group A (N=39)	14	22	3
Group B (N=30)	14	15	1
Group C (N=39)	21	17	2



*Research Question 2: What is the main factor that stops students when they are writing?*

As shown in Table 30, for Group A, the main factor that stops participants when writing is the act of generating ideas for their essays; an activity mainly done during the pre-writing stage. For Group B and C, it was found that participants are held back by the act of finding the right expression for their essay. This is an activity mainly done during the writing stage.

**Table 30. Factors that stop students when they are writing**

<b>Group</b>	<b>Getting Ideas</b>	<b>Spelling a word</b>	<b>Finding the right expression</b>	<b>Rereading what has been written</b>
Group A ( <i>N</i> =39)	15	9	13	2
Group B ( <i>N</i> =30)	11	1	15	3
Group C ( <i>N</i> =39)	15	1	18	5

*Research Question 3: What is the relationship between L2 writing strategies and writing performance?*

To examine the relationship between participants' strategy use and writing performance, essay scores were correlated with strategy scores. For the purpose of this research, the analyses are presented based on the different stages in the writing process.

#### *Pre Writing Stage*

Table 31 presents correlations between strategies in the pre-writing stage and writing performance. For Group A, findings indicate that there is some evidence for a relationship between the strategy of noting down words related to a topic and writing

performance. The overall positive relationships suggest that this is a positive strategy for learners in Group A. Aside from that; there is also a trend toward a relationship between the strategy of planning in each paragraph and writing performance. The positive relationship implies that this strategy could potentially be a good predictor of writing performance particularly for learners in Group A.

For Group B, there is a trend toward a negative relationship between the strategy of noting down words related to a topic and four out of five of the writing measures, with the exception of mechanics. In contrast to Group A, this strategy did not promote better writing performance among learners in Group B. In addition, findings also revealed a trend towards a relationship between the strategy of writing an outline in L1 and four out of five measures in writing. Although none of the relationships were significant, the overall negative relationship suggests that the use of this strategy predicts a decrease in writing performance among learners in Group B. With regards to findings in Group C, it was found that there were no significant or consistent relationships between any of the pre-writing strategies and writing performance measures. This surprising outcome suggests that the six pre-writing strategies highlighted in this study are not likely to contribute much to the prediction of writing performance for this group of learners.

**Table 31. Correlation between writing performance and pre writing strategies**

	Group A					Group B					Group C				
	C	O	V	L	M	C	O	V	L	M	C	O	V	L	M
<i>Look at a model essay</i>	.232	.146	.138	.000	.213	.104	.087	.265	.164	.255	.051	.106	-.124	-.020	.256
<i>Think about ideas in L1</i>	.096	-.001	-.062	-.141	-.227	-.197	-.049	-.113	.023	.049	-.073	.028	-.038	.043	.118
<i>Note down words related to the topic</i>	.279	.275	.331*	.377*	.326*	-.311	-.227	-.110	-.119	.115	.026	.072	-.114	.037	-.116
<i>Write outline in L1</i>	.066	-.092	-.037	.011	-.104	-.350	-.231	-.053	-.154	-.125	-.042	.045	-.093	-.075	.090
<i>Only plan what to write in the first paragraph</i>	.200	.017	-.014	-.097	-.127	-.172	-.228	.038	-.293	-.082	.206	.075	.157	-.040	-.172
<i>Plan what to write in each paragraph</i>	.347*	.286	.283	.258	.470**	-.073	-.036	-.209	.059	.006	.004	.082	-.151	.089	.212

Note: C=Content, O=Organisation, V=Vocabulary, L=Language, M=Mechanics

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

### *Drafting Stage*

Table 32 present the correlations between writing performance and drafting strategies for participants in Group A. The findings indicate that there is significant evidence for a relationship between the strategy *starting an essay with an introduction* and writing performance. Aside from that, there is also a trend towards a relationship between the strategy *going back to the outline to get ideas* and writing performance. Similar results can also be seen between the strategy *stopping to reread to see if the points are well connected* and writing performance. With regards to dictionary use in writing, there is a trend towards a relationship between the strategy of using a bilingual dictionary and writing performance. The overall positive correlation between this strategy and students' writing performance implies that using a bilingual dictionary to come up with unfamiliar words can potentially help students write better essays. With regards to tutors' expectations, there is strong evidence for a relationship between the strategy *think about tutors expectations when writing* and writing performance. The significant positive relationship suggests that having a sense of audience when writing increases the probability of learners writing better essays.

**Table 32. Correlation between writing scores and drafting strategies for Group A**

Strategies	Content	Organisation	Vocabulary	Language	Mechanics
Start with the introduction	.329*	.421**	.331*	.294	.327*
Reread what has been written	.185	.048	.111	.075	.167
Go back to outline to get ideas	.192	.303	.190	.243	.437**
Write bits of texts in L1	.016	-.138	-.031	-.042	-.003
Struggle with vocabulary and grammar	-.116	-.113	-.219	-.135	-.015
Stop to reread after each sentence	-.190	-.227	-.283	-.218	-.278
Struggle with spelling	-.122	-.082	-.103	.011	-.119
Stop to reread to see if points are connected	.273	.108	.203	.295	.336*
Write in L1 first and find an appropriate English word later	.150	.046	.063	.162	-.191
Stop writing to look up the word in the dictionary	.249	.243	.252	.123	.146
Use a bilingual dictionary	.345*	.286	.259	.125	.203
Use monolingual dictionary	-.019	-.041	.155	.129	.179
Constantly check spelling and grammar	.109	.078	.162	.000	.017
Think about tutor's expectations	.522**	.500**	.501**	.522**	.389*

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 33 presents the correlation between participants' writing performance and drafting strategies for Group B. Findings reveal that there is a trend towards a relationship between the strategy *rereading what has been written* and writing performance measures, with the exception for vocabulary. The positive relationship suggests that this strategy can potentially predict better writing performance. Apart from that, findings from the analysis also revealed a similar trend towards a relationship between the strategy *write bits of text in LI* and three out of five writing measures, with the exception for Organisation and Mechanics. Although the correlations were non-significant, they were overall negative. This result implies that learners who use this strategy received lower essay scores.

In addition to that, findings in this study also showed evidence for a relationship between vocabulary and grammar difficulty and writing performance. The negative relationship suggests that learners who are more concerned about vocabulary and grammar when drafting essays have the higher probability of getting lower essay scores. Several drafting strategies were found to have weak correlations with writing performance. They are *stop to reread after each sentence*, *struggle with spelling* and *use a bilingual dictionary*. The negative relationships between these strategies and writing performance imply that those who apply these strategies are likely the less proficient learners in the group.

**Table 33. Correlation between writing scores and drafting strategies for Group B**

Strategies	Content	Organisation	Vocabulary	Language	Mechanics
Start with the introduction	-.091	-.028	-.045	.106	.177
Reread what has been written	.293	.217	.038	.170	.147
Go back to outline to get ideas	.099	.014	.217	.119	.136
Write bits of texts in L1	-.220	-.043	-.164	-.129	-.060
Struggle with vocabulary and grammar	-.331	-.347	-.406*	-.421*	-.280
Stop to reread after each sentence	-.337	-.137	-.148	-.147	-.293
Struggle with spelling	-.319	-.192	-.243	-.327	-.284
Stop to reread to see if points are connected	.098	.167	.199	.029	.278
Write in L1 first and find an appropriate English word later	-.172	.072	-.049	.018	.005
Stop writing to look up the word in the dictionary	-.021	-.040	-.014	.030	.163
Use a bilingual dictionary	-.370*	-.200	-.322	-.067	-.012
Use monolingual dictionary	-.264	.008	-.091	-.042	.062
Constantly check spelling and grammar	.159	.229	-.023	.245	.228
Think about tutor's expectations	-.306	-.298	.049	-.158	.030

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 34 displays the correlation analysis between drafting strategies and writing performance for Group C. Overall, three negative strategies appeared to be associated with writing performance. As can be seen, there is some evidence for a positive relationship between the strategy *going back to my outline to get ideas* and writing performance. This implies that the use of this strategy has the potential to promote better writing performance. In contrast, concerns with grammar and vocabulary seem to be a hindrance in writing performance. As presented, there is a trend toward a relationship between grammar and vocabulary difficulty and some measures of writing. Another strategy that seems to correlate negatively with writing performance is the use of a dictionary. There is evidence of a relationship between the strategy *stop to write to look up a word in a dictionary* and writing performance. This finding suggests that those applying this strategy are likely the less proficient learners who scored lower writing scores.



**Table 34. Correlation between writing scores and drafting strategies for Group C**

Strategies	Content	Organisation	Vocabulary	Language	Mechanics
Start with the introduction	-.082	-.074	-.067	-.138	-.204
Reread what has been written	-.110	-.064	-.013	.081	.027
Go back to outline to get ideas	-.339*	-.113	-.329*	-.120	.046
Write bits of texts in L1	-.164	-.047	-.191	-.065	.004
Struggle with vocabulary and grammar	-.139	-.137	-.277	-.234	-.130
Stop to reread after each sentence	-.013	-.056	-.035	-.106	.163
Struggle with spelling	-.009	.117	-.055	-.027	.006
Stop to reread to see if points are connected	-.097	.080	-.257	-.039	.114
Write in L1 first and find an appropriate English word later	-.127	.174	-.148	-.067	.086
Stop writing to look up the word in the dictionary	-.364*	-.413**	-.494**	-.373*	-.181
Use a bilingual dictionary	.036	.075	-.104	.109	.129
Use monolingual dictionary	-.026	-.064	-.082	-.193	-.192
Constantly check spelling and grammar	.060	.065	-.110	-.012	.031
Think about tutor's expectations	-.192	-.149	-.204	-.146	-.096

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

### *Revising Stage*

Table 35 shows the correlation between revising strategies and writing performance for Group A. As can be seen, there is evidence of a positive relationship between the strategy *reading text aloud* and writing performance. In contrast, the strategies *hand in paper after reading it* and *make changes in the content or ideas of the essay* were negatively correlated with writing performance. Although the correlations for the latter strategy were not significant, there were overall negative. Another positive strategy that correlated with writing performance was *check my mistakes and try to learn from them*. There were significant positive correlations between this strategy and the students' writing performance, implying that students who were able to apply this skill performed better in writing. Aside from that, there is also some evidence for a relationship between the strategy *focusing more on the points presented in the essay* and writing performance. The overall positive relationship suggests that those who apply this strategy performed better in writing.

**Table 35. Correlation between Writing Scores and Revising Strategies for Group A**

Strategies	Content	Organisation	Vocabulary	Language	Mechanics
Read text aloud	.369*	.353*	.379*	.399*	.324*
Read only after the whole paper is done	.097	.058	-.042	.064	.012
Hand in paper after reading it	-.446**	-.372**	-.514**	-.460**	-.376*
Make changes in vocabulary	.233	.232	.127	.255	.019
Make changes in sentence structure	.063	.073	.056	.162	.049
More paragraphs or sections around	-.049	-.066	-.017	.030	-.135
Make changes in content or ideas	-.224	-.188	-.233	-.257	-.105
Focus on one thing at a time	-.068	-.075	-.057	-.175	.031
Show text to somebody	.175	.286	.013	.217	.179
Check mistakes and try to learn from them	.482**	.413**	.445**	.390*	.467**
Focus more on spelling and grammar	.099	.156	.143	.112	.122
Focus more on the overall essay organization	.105	-.053	.062	.036	-.068
Focus more on the points presented	.338*	.485**	.250	.262	.557**
Start writing a new draft if not happy with essay	.034	.169	.035	.123	.157

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 36 presents the correlation analysis between revising strategies and writing performance for Group B. As can be seen, there is a trend towards a negative relationship between the strategy *make changes in vocabulary* and writing performance. A similar finding can also be seen between the strategy *make changes in sentence structure* and writing performance. These findings imply that those who apply these strategies are likely the least good writers in the group. A more positive strategy for Group B was *focus on one aspect of the essay at a time*. As can be seen, there is a trend towards a relationship between this strategy and writing performance. The overall positive relationship implies that learners who apply this strategy have the likelihood to perform better in writing. In addition to that, there is also evidence for a relationship between the strategy *check one's mistakes and try to learn from them* and four out of the five measures for writing performance. This finding suggests that applying this strategy could potentially help students to perform better in writing. Aside from that the strategy *focus on the spelling and grammar of my essay* also seemed to be associated to writing. There is some evidence for a relationship between this strategy and four out of the five writing measures. Once again the positive relationship suggests that the use of this strategy was a potential predictor of writing performance.

**Table 36. Correlation between Writing Scores and Revising Strategies for Group B**

Strategies	Content	Organisation	Vocabulary	Language	Mechanics
Read text aloud	.151	.147	.279	.092	.067
Read only after the whole paper is done	-.022	.081	.142	.213	.285
Hand in paper after reading it	-.086	-.240	.050	-.144	-.049
Make changes in vocabulary	-.169	-.344	-.040	-.204	-.155
Make changes in sentence structure	-.230	-.217	-.285	-.251	-.018
More paragraphs or sections around	.051	-.225	-.005	-.196	-.052
Make changes in content or ideas	.139	.045	-.046	-.118	.083
Focus on one thing at a time	.175	.335	.186	.302	.219
Show text to somebody	.014	.117	-.006	.033	-.019
Check mistakes and try to learn from them	-.029	.155	.261	.235	.364*
Focus more on spelling and grammar	.071	.315	.109	.334	.409*
Focus more on the overall essay organization	-.054	.263	-.053	.145	.348
Focus more on the points presented	.196	.300	.129	.186	.250
Start writing a new draft if not happy with essay	.272	.165	.155	.049	.167

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 37 presents the correlation between revising strategies and writing performance for Group C. As can be seen, there is evidence of a relationship between the strategy *check mistakes and try to learn from them* and four out of five measures of writing, with the exception for mechanics. The positive relationship implies that learners who apply this strategy have the probability of getting better scores in writing.

**Table 37. Correlation between Writing Scores and Revising Strategies for Group C**

<b>Strategies</b>	<b>Content</b>	<b>Organisation</b>	<b>Vocabulary</b>	<b>Language</b>	<b>Mechanics</b>
Read text aloud	.295	.183	.235	.087	-.106
Read only after the whole paper is done	.059	.110	-.017	-.078	-.171
Hand in paper after reading it	.227	.111	.115	.137	.096
Make changes in vocabulary	.092	.058	.031	.182	.239
Make changes in sentence structure	-.031	-.019	-.114	.000	-.104
More paragraphs or sections around	-.031	-.017	-.153	.015	.002
Make changes in content or ideas	.126	.096	-.053	.062	.157
Focus on one thing at a time	.161	.057	.118	.267	.284
Show text to somebody	-.094	-.180	-.149	.059	.216
Check mistakes and try to learn from them	-.359*	-.319*	-.348*	-.106	-.010
Focus more on spelling and grammar	.033	-.094	.001	.040	.045
Focus more on the overall essay organization	-.087	-.229	-.120	-.024	.083
Focus more on the points presented	-.158	-.185	-.271	-.228	.112
Start writing a new draft if not happy with essay	-.287	-.274	.003	.018	.007

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

*Research Question 4: What is the relationship between L2 proficiency and writing performance?*

In an attempt to answer RQ4, participants' vocabulary test scores were correlated with essay scores. As can be seen in Table 38, the relationships in the first row suggest that vocabulary scores in the Vocabulary Test 1 were associated with students' writing scores. Similar results were found for Vocabulary Test 2 and Vocabulary Test 3. For Group B, the relationships in the second row suggest that vocabulary scores in the Vocabulary Test 2 were associated with content and vocabulary scores. Although no significant relationships were found for Vocabulary Tests 1 and 3, the correlations were overall positive. For Group C, it was found that there was no significant relationship between scores in Vocabulary Test 1 and writing performance. However, there were significant correlations between Vocabulary Test 2 and Content, Organisation and Vocabulary. A similar result was found for Vocabulary Test 3. They were significantly correlated with scores in Content, Organisation and Vocabulary.

**Table 38. Correlation between vocabulary scores and essay scores**

	Group A			Group B			Group C		
	Test 1	Test 2	Test 3	Test 1	Test 2	Test 3	Test 1	Test 2	Test 3
Content	.397*	.290	.422**	.244	.461*	.373	-.058	.358*	.386*
Organisation	.317*	.358*	.388*	.274	.357	.303	.071	.376*	.409**
Vocabulary	.452**	.434**	.459**	.197	.392*	.214	.092	.452**	.454**
Language	.451**	.431**	.517**	.255	.346	.174	.000	.305	.282
Mechanics	.574**	.556**	.557**	.156	.290	.211	-.113	-.001	.050

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).



*Research Question 5: What is the relationship between writing attitude and writing performance?*

Table 39 presents the correlation between writing attitude and writing performance. For Group A, there is some evidence for a negative relationship between writing performance and the statement “I am not good at writing in English”. The negative relationship implies that as apprehension in writing increased, writing performance decreased. In addition, there is also some evidence of a positive relationship between writing performance and the statement “I feel confident in my ability to express ideas in writing”. The positive relationship implies that as confidence level in writing increased, writing performance increased. For Group B, there is a trend towards a relationship between the statement “I am not good at writing in English” and writing performance. Similarly, there is also a trend for a relationship between the statement “When I hand in my essay I know I am going to do poorly” and writing performance. The overall negative relationships imply that those who perceived themselves as not good in writing and indicating writing apprehension are likely the ones who did not perform well. For Group C, there is clear evidence for a relationship between writing performance and the statement “My lecturers like my writing”. The overall positive relationship implies that learners who perceive that their lecturers like their writing are the better writers in the Group.

**Table 39. Correlations between writing attitude and writing performance**

Writing Attitude	Group A					Group B					Group C				
	C	O	V	L	M	C	O	V	L	M	C	O	V	L	M
I like having the chance to express my ideas in writing	.215	.213	.306	.183	.307	-.064	-.134	-.146	-.024	.098	-.079	-.126	-.073	.055	-.111
My lecturers like my writing	.150	.031	-.060	-.023	.036	-.006	.045	.065	.145	.319	<b>.380*</b>	<b>.478**</b>	<b>.473*</b>	<b>.602**</b>	<b>.391*</b>
Writing is a very unpleasant experience	-.174	-.177	-.082	-.098	-.216	-.252	-.218	-.083	-.290	-.180	.011	-.095	-.272	-.229	-.066
I am not good at writing in English	<b>-.317*</b>	-.287	-.298	<b>-.343*</b>	<b>-.322*</b>	-.319	-.180	-.228	<b>-.362*</b>	-.155	.132	.173	.013	.082	.060
I feel confident in my ability to express ideas	.229	<b>.340*</b>	.301	<b>.417**</b>	<b>.403*</b>	.079	.101	.169	.265	.069	.034	-.048	-.053	.071	.273
When I hand in essays I know I am going to do poorly	-.173	-.205	-.246	-.181	-.105	-.297	-.227	-.139	-.339	-.301	-.180	-.072	-.175	-.202	-.197
I do not think I write in English as well as my friends	-.300	-.227	<b>-.318*</b>	-.160	-.153	-.212	-.023	-.202	-.149	-.176	-.046	-.041	-.158	-.098	-.087

**Table 39. continued**

Note: C=Content, O=Organisation, V=Vocabulary, L=Language, M=Mechanics)

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

*Question 6: Are writing blocks associated with writing performance?*

Table 40 presents the correlation analysis between writing block and writing performance. As can be seen, no significant relationships were found between these two variables across all three groups. This implies that writing block was not related to writing scores. This finding is consistent with Lee (2005) study which found that writer's block was not associated with writing performance.

**Table 40. Correlations between writing block and writing performance**

	Group A					Group B					Group C				
	C	O	V	L	M	C	O	V	L	M	C	O	V	L	M
My first paragraph takes me over an hour or more to write	.003	.022	-.014	.023	-.144	-.162	-.039	-.053	-.103	-.101	.109	-.008	-.047	.039	.160
Starting a paper is very hard for me	.192	.194	.217	.152	-.073	.263	.120	-.006	.065	-.171	.111	.137	.047	.166	.272
At times I find it hard to write what I mean	.279	.257	.030	.181	.097	-.154	-.161	-.270	-.221	-.239	.199	.113	.070	.190	.132

Note: C=Content, O=Organisation, V=Vocabulary, L=Language, M=Mechanics

\*\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

*Research Question 7: What kind of writing errors correlate with writing performance?*

In an attempt to investigate the relationship between writing errors and writing performance, the writing variables gathered from SALT analysis were correlated with participants' writing scores. For easy perusal, the results for each group are presented separately. Table 41 shows the correlations between writing performance and writing errors for Group A. With regards to lexical errors, results indicated that there was a positive correlation between pronoun error and language score. However, no correlations were found for the other writing components. This seems to imply that, as pronoun errors increased, scores for language decreased. Similarly, correlations were also found between spelling errors and writing scores. The overall negative relationships suggest that as more errors are made in spelling, scores in writing components decreased. Interestingly, positive correlations were found between word error and all writing measures. This finding suggests that as word errors increased, scores for the writing increased too. This has probably got to do with the fact that participants in Group A who made more word errors are the ones that produced more words. As earlier analysis has indicated, the total number of words produced correlated positively with writing performance scores.

With regard to sentence level errors, it was revealed that there were correlations between wrongly added words and scores for content and vocabulary. The negative relationships imply that as ratio for wrongly added words increased, scores in content and vocabulary decreased. Results also indicated that subject-verb agreement error was negatively correlated with all components in writing. The negative relationships imply that as subject-verb agreement errors increased, scores in writing decreased. The correlation coefficients are particularly significant for vocabulary and language components.

Correlations were also found between tense errors and all the writing components. Finally, sentence errors were found to be significantly correlated with writing components. The overall negative correlations imply that as sentence errors increased, scores in writing decreased.

**Table 41. Correlations between writing performance and writing errors for Group A**

	Content	Organisation	Vocabulary	Language	Mechanics
Number of different words	-.205	-.214	.061	.048	.031
Total words	.422**	.366*	.260	.160	.111
Added word/morpheme	-.221	-.098	-.159	-.008	-.063
Pronoun error	.017	-.018	-.136	-.200	-.062
Word error	.202	.328*	.250	.200	.195
Spelling error	-.302	-.389*	-.280	-.276	-.449**
Subject-verb agreement error	-.252	-.348	-.374*	-.370*	-.334
Tenses error	.251	.223	.220	.137	.198
Sentence error	-.338*	-.335*	-.450**	-.556**	-.297
Word order error	-.101	-.036	-.175	-.233	-.204

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 42 displays the correlations between writing performance and writing errors in Group B. With regard to lexical errors, results indicated that positive correlations were found between spelling errors and scores in content and vocabulary. In contrast, negative correlation was found between spelling errors and mechanics. Also negative was the relationship between pronoun errors and writing components scores, particularly in content, language and mechanics. This finding implies that as pronoun errors increased, scores in these three components decreased. Interestingly, the increase of word errors in writing did not predict lower scores in writing. In fact, positive correlations were found between word error and writing scores. Finally, negative correlations were found between word order errors and writing scores. At the sentence level, analyses indicated that as wrongly added words/ morpheme increased, scores for content and vocabulary decreased. Similarly, it was discovered that negative correlations were found between subject verb agreement errors and writing scores. There were also negative correlations between sentence error and writing scores, which implies that as sentence errors increased, scores in writing decreased. In contrast, correlations between tense error and writing scores proved to be positive. It seems that as errors of tenses increased, participants' writing scores increased too. Finally, negative correlations were found between word order error and writing scores.

**Table 42. Correlations between writing performance and writing errors for Group B**

	Content	Organisation	Vocabulary	Language	Mechanics
Number of different words	-.206	-.084	-.058	.010	-.019
Total words	.191	.049	.108	-.096	-.017
Added word/morpheme	.059	-.061	.055	.045	.049
Pronoun error	-.196	-.052	-.090	-.210	-.105
Word error	-.223	-.432*	-.338	-.373*	-.440*
Spelling error	.276	.048	.122	-.001	-.133
Subject-verb agreement error	-.252	-.348	-.374*	-.370*	-.334
Tenses error	.112	-.037	-.192	-.093	-.107
Sentence error	-.479*	-.496*	-.403*	-.497**	-.402*
Word order error	-.092	-.277	-.229	-.213	-.278

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 43 shows the correlations between writing performance and writing errors in Group C. As can be seen, there is a trend towards a relationship between spelling errors and two out of five writing measures (organisation and language). However the relationships were not significant. A similar result was found between pronoun errors and four out of five of the writing measures, with the exception of mechanics. There is also a trend towards a negative relationship between word errors and writing measures, with the exception of mechanics. At the sentence level, it was found that wrongly added word error did not show any correlation to any of the writing component scores. Results also indicated a decrease in writing scores with the increase of subject verb agreement error. Similar



results were found for correlations between tense error and writing scores. It seems that as errors of tenses increased, participants' writing scores decreased. In a similar vein, correlations were found between sentence error and writing scores, with the exception of the mechanics component. Word order error positively correlated with content scores but not with the other components.

**Table 43. Correlations between writing performance and errors made at the word and utterance levels for Group C**

	Content	Organisation	Vocabulary	Language	Mechanics
Number of different words	-.045	.110	-.004	.100	-.061
Total words	.270	.219	.321*	.057	.174
Added word*	.021	-.001	-.099	.028	.019
Pronoun error	-.124	-.258	-.186	-.144	-.043
Error at word level	-.255	-.213	-.327*	-.290	-.054
Spelling error	-.006	.134	.077	.138	.045
Subject-verb agreement error	-.246	-.151	-.288	-.242	-.196
Tenses error	-.273	-.256	-.353*	-.254	-.057
Error at utterance level	-.226	-.166	-.219	-.139	-.092
Word order error	.212	.046	-.064	.053	.076

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

*Research Question 8: Is L2 proficiency associated with writing errors?*

In an attempt to answer this question, a series of statistical analyses were carried out. ANOVA test was carried out, followed by Scheffe Post-Hoc comparison to compare the writing errors and text length across the three groups (see Table 44). For Total Number of Words, the test revealed a significant result which indicated that Group A was significantly different from B and C. However, Group B and C were not different. Inspection of the means suggest that Group A produced fewer words than the other two groups. For Addition errors, there was a significant result which indicated that Group A was different from C but there was no significant difference between Group A and B as well as Group B and C. Inspection of the means suggest that Group B produced more Addition errors than the other two groups. Significant results were also found for Pronoun errors which indicated that Group A was significantly different from Groups B and C. However, Groups B and C were not different. Inspection of the means implies that Group A did more pronoun errors than B and C. For Word Error, there were significant results which indicated that Group A was different from Group C. But Group B was not different from Groups A and C. Inspection of the means suggests that Group B did more Word Error compared to Groups A and C. For sentence error, there was a significant result which indicated that Group A was significantly different from B and C. However, Groups B and C were not different. Inspection of the means also indicated that participants in Group A produced more sentence errors compared to Groups B and C.

**Table 44. ANOVA and Scheffe Post-Hoc comparison across Groups A, B and C**

	Group A			Group B			Group C			Anova			Scheffe Post Hoc ( <i>p</i> values)		
	N	M	SD	N	M	SD	N	M	SD	F	Df	P	A vs B	A vs C	B vs C
Lexical diversity	39	.396	.059	30	.407	.060	40	.387	.058	.447	2,106	.641	.962	.800	.667
Total words	39	220	63.1	30	311	69.4	40	304	65.2	22.41	2, 106	.000	<b>.000</b>	<b>.000</b>	.916
Addition	39	6.2	3.04	30	7.2	4.52	40	6.12	3.56	5.49	2, 106	.005	.143	<b>.006</b>	.578
Pronoun error	39	2.71	3.88	30	1.03	1.42	40	1.25	1.58	8.38	2, 106	.000	<b>.003</b>	<b>.003</b>	.938
Word error	39	8.15	4.39	30	8.7	4.85	40	7.60	4.51	5.78	2, 106	.004	.069	<b>.006</b>	.784
Spelling error	39	1.07	1.93	30	1.10	1.49	40	1.47	2.21	.799	2, 106	.452	.459	.907	.699
Subject verb agreement error	39	1.71	1.43	30	2.20	1.71	40	2.67	2.11	1.210	2, 106	.302	.815	.637	.314
Tenses error	39	1.10	1.51	30	1.06	1.46	40	1.32	1.80	.299	2, 106	.742	.821	.995	.767
Word order error	39	.974	1.26	30	1.10	.994	40	.875	1.06	1.298	2, 106	.277	.741	.277	.771
sentence level error	39	8.33	4.13	30	6.40	3.96	40	7.47	3.78	22.00	2, 106	.000	<b>.000</b>	<b>.000</b>	.321

\*. Bold *p* values are significant at the point of 0.05 level

Table 45 presents the correlation coefficients between the Vocabulary test and writing errors for Group A. As can be seen, there is evidence of a relationship between spelling error and all three vocabulary tests in the study. The overall negative correlations found between vocabulary tests scores and pronoun errors imply that as vocabulary size increased, pronoun errors decreased. Apart from spelling errors, there is also a trend towards a relationship between addition errors and L2 proficiency, particularly for two of the vocabulary measures used in the study. The overall negative relationship suggests that as receptive vocabulary knowledge increased, addition errors decreased. At the sentence level, significant correlations were found between sentence errors and vocabulary test scores. The overall negative relationship seems to suggest that as participants' receptive vocabulary size increased, sentence errors decreased. Among the eight errors investigated, sentence errors, spelling errors and addition errors had the largest effect on writing performance.

**Table 45. Correlations between L2 proficiency and writing errors for Group A**

	Vocabulary Test 1	Vocabulary Test 2	Vocabulary Test 3
Addition error	-.225	-.170	.009
Pronoun error	-.085	-.054	-.144
Word error	-.012	.129	.109
Spelling error	-.375*	-.308	-.299
Subject Verb Agreement error	.118	-.001	.269
Tenses error	.092	.162	.274
Sentence error	-.437**	-.466**	-.345*
Word order error	.053	-.076	-.133

Table 45 continued.

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 46 presents the correlation coefficients between the Vocabulary test and writing errors for Group B. The analysis revealed a significant correlation between pronoun errors and vocabulary test 3. The overall negative correlations found between vocabulary tests scores and pronoun errors imply that those who had smaller vocabulary size produced more pronoun errors. Relationships between Vocabulary test and word errors were also significant. The negative relationships suggest that as receptive vocabulary size increased, word errors decreased. Apart from word errors, there is also evidence of a relationship between tenses errors and L2 proficiency, particularly for one measure; vocabulary test 1. The overall negative relationship suggests that as receptive vocabulary knowledge increased, tenses errors decreased. At the sentence level, significant correlations were found between sentence errors and vocabulary test scores. The overall negative relationship seems to suggest that as participants' receptive vocabulary size increased, sentence errors decreased. Among the eight errors investigated, sentence error, tenses error and word error had the largest effect on writing performance.

**Table 46. Correlations between L2 proficiency and writing errors for Group B**

	Vocabulary Test 1	Vocabulary Test 2	Vocabulary Test 3
Addition error	.030	.044	.026
Pronoun error	-.285	-.336	-.394*
Word error	-.549**	-.675**	-.606**
Spelling error	.087	.159	.103
Subject Verb Agreement error	-.136	-.139	-.015
Tenses error	-.491**	-.325	-.232
Sentence error	-.545**	-.569**	-.424*
Word order error	-.014	.033	-.239

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 47 presents the correlations between vocabulary test scores and writing errors for Group C. As can be seen, there was a negative correlation between word errors and vocabulary test 1, meaning errors at the word level decreased with increased vocabulary size. Similarly, the correlation between spelling errors and vocabulary test 1 was also negative, implying that spelling errors decreased with increased vocabulary size. At the sentence level, there is evidence of a relationship between sentence errors and vocabulary test 2 and 3. The negative relationships suggest that as participants' vocabulary size increased, sentence errors decreased.

**Table 47. Correlations between L2 proficiency and errors at the word and sentence level for Group C**

	Vocabulary Test 1	Vocabulary Test 2	Vocabulary Test 3
Addition error	.150	-.202	-.288
Pronoun error	-.247	-.244	-.204
Word error	.141	-.009	-.058
Spelling error	-.135	.039	-.028
Subject Verb Agreement error	-.195	.233	.060
Tenses error	.019	.119	-.264
Sentence error	-.091	-.198	-.284
Word order error	-.049	-.154	-.070

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

*Research Question 9: What is the relationship between L2 proficiency, text length and TTR?*

Table 48 shows the correlation between L2 proficiency, lexical diversity and written production in Group A. As can be seen, lexical diversity and vocabulary test scores are correlated particularly for Vocabulary Tests 1 and 2. In addition, a positive correlation was also found between written production and vocabulary test 3. However, text length and Vocabulary tests 1 and 2 were not correlated. In summary, receptive vocabulary knowledge particularly at the higher level has the potential to predict text length for participants in Group A. For Group B, no correlations were found between lexical diversity and vocabulary test scores. Similarly, no correlations were found between text length and vocabulary test scores. This finding suggests that participants' receptive vocabulary knowledge were not related to the range of vocabulary used in the essay. There was also no effect on text length. For Group C, correlations were found between lexical diversity and vocabulary test scores. However, no correlations were found between written production and vocabulary test 1 and 3. A low correlation was found between written production and vocabulary test 2. In summary, receptive vocabulary knowledge does not seem to be associated with lexical diversity and text length for participants in Group C.



**Table 48. Correlations between L2 Proficiency, TTR and text length**

	Group A			Group B			Group C		
	Test 1	Test 2	Test 3	Test 1	Test 2	Test 3	Test 1	Test 2	Test 3
Text length	.081	.074	.348*	.034	.036	.059	-.052	-.103	-.045
TTR	.229	.183	-.075	.026	-.004	-.009	.195	.268	.249

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

#### 5.4 Discussion of findings

The results in this study indicate that the main factor that interrupts the flow of writing for participants in Group A was the act of generating ideas. This activity is mostly done during the pre-writing stage. For Groups B and C, the factor that interrupts the participants' writing process was the act of finding the right expression during the drafting stage. A possible explanation for the discrepancy of findings between Group A and the other two groups is that Group A had a lower proficiency level compared to Groups B and C. Due to this, it is assumed that they struggle with writing even from the initial stage of the writing process. According to Scott (1996), in L2 writing, the process of idea generation and the use of long term memory are more complex. Students are confused between long term memory information (ideas) on the topic and the language of expression. This confusion, Scott argues, hinders the process of idea generation. It is therefore assumed that learners in Group A face this kind of difficulty at the pre-writing stage due to lack of L2 proficiency. The fact that they had the least amount of academic

experience in tertiary level education also means that they are not as advanced in writing as the learners in Groups B and C.

With regard to Research Question 2, it was found that a majority of participants in Group A and Group B perceived the writing stage as the most difficult part of the writing process. On the other hand, participants in Group C perceived the pre-writing stage as the most difficult part of the writing process. It was surprising to discover that Group C perceived activities such as brainstorming for points, mind-mapping and making an outline to be the most difficult feat to carry out as they are the most academically experienced group in the study. Learners in Group C have learned a wider scope of skills needed in the pre writing activities and thus, possessed more experience in writing. Findings in the current study seem to suggest that perceived level of difficulty in writing is not associated with level of academic experience or L2 proficiency. Therefore, no generalisation can be made as to which stage of the writing process is most difficult for different level of ESL learners.

In terms of the relationship between writing strategies and writing performance (Research Question 3), findings in this study revealed that different strategies appeared positive and negative among the three groups. The findings in this study argues that pre writing strategies such as *note down words related to a topic* and *plan in each paragraph* are important especially at the initial level of writing instructions (Group A). In addition, this thesis also argues for the importance of using effective drafting strategies for learners with limited proficiency level (Group A), such as *starting essay with an introduction, going back to outline to get ideas, stopping to reread if the points are well connected, use a bilingual dictionary* and *think about tutors' expectations when writing*. Meanwhile, drafting strategies that did not seem to contribute much to writing

performance for learners in Group B were *write bits of text in L1, focus on grammar and vocabulary, stop to reread after each sentence, focus on spelling and use a bilingual dictionary*. For Group C, drafting strategies which appeared ineffective were *going back to outline to get ideas* and *stop to write to look up a word in a dictionary*. With regard to revising strategies, findings in this thesis revealed that the strategies *read text aloud, check mistakes and try to learn from them* and *focus more on the points presented in my essay* showed the potential of being positive strategies for Group A. For Group B, more revising positive strategies appeared to be *focus on one aspect at a time, check mistakes and try to learn from them* and *focus on the spelling and grammar of my essay*. It seems that the strategy *check mistakes and try to learn from them* was effective for both Groups A and B. However, this particular strategy correlated negatively with writing performance for participants in Group C. The inconsistency regarding the relationship between writing strategies and writing performance across three groups may be attributed to the different proficiency levels of the participants and the ways in which writing instructions were taught to them.

With regard to Research Question 4, which looks at the relationship between L2 proficiency and writing performance, the results in this study revealed that a higher level of L2 proficiency was related to better performance in writing. This was common across all three groups. This finding supports previous research into this area which links L2 proficiency and L2 writing performance. Previous studies have reported that a higher L2 proficiency was related to higher L2 writing ability (Aliakbari, 2002; Kiany & Nejad, 2001; Cumming, 1989 in Leki et. al, 2008). Therefore, this finding seems to suggest that L2 proficiency can be a reliable predictor of writing performance. A more important finding in this study was the role of L2 proficiency in the use of strategy

among L2 writers. As shown in the results, participants in Group B whose L2 proficiency was comparatively higher than Group A and C reported the least amount of L1 use in writing. Additionally, it was also found that certain revising strategies were more effective among participants' in Group B compared to the other two groups in this study. The obvious one which was related to writing performance was the strategy of *check grammar and spelling* during the revising stage. A possible explanation for this is that participants in Group B who possess a higher level of L2 proficiency were more capable of performing lexical evaluation of their own essays. This finding is consistent with Sasaki's (2000) which found that L2 proficiency or lack of it appears to explain part of the difference in strategy use between the experts and the novice writers. Although participants in Group B can hardly be categorised as expert writers, the idea is that L2 proficiency may influence the way ESL students apply strategies in writing.

Apart from that, it was also found that vocabulary size plays a role in assessing writing performance particularly for Groups A and B. For Group A, it was found that higher receptive vocabulary size predicted a decrease in spelling and sentence error. Whereas for Group B, a higher vocabulary size predicted a decrease in pronoun, word, tenses and sentence error. Surprisingly for Group C, no substantial evidence of relationships between vocabulary size scores and writing errors were found. The overall negative correlations between vocabulary test scores and sentence errors, seen in Groups A and B suggest that vocabulary is a vital factor in participants' writing performance. In this sense, the more words a learner knows, the less sentence errors he or she will make.

With regard to Research Question 7, the results of this study showed significant correlations between writing scores and a number of writing errors. For Group A, errors

that were found to be negatively correlated with writing performance were spelling, subject-verb agreement and sentence error. In regard to the positive relationship between tenses error and writing performance in Group A, this study argues that those who are making these errors are the ones who are better writers in the group. For Group B, writing performance scores seemed to be related to word, subject-verb agreement and sentence errors. The overall negative correlations suggest that as these errors increased, writing performance decreased. For Group C, it was found that there was a trend for a relationship between word, subject verb agreement, tenses errors and writing performance. Overall, subject verb agreement error appeared to be a common factor that impacts writing performance for all three groups, whereas word error was a common factor for Groups B and C. This finding is consistent with Surina and Kamarulzaman's (2009) claim that a majority of students in Malaysia have problems with their subject verb agreement in writing. It is argued that Malaysian ESL learners face problems in subject verb agreement because in their L1 (Malay), there is no such rule regarding subject-verb agreement. In Malay, all subjects either singular or plural require the same verb form. This is supported by Bahiyah and Wijayasuria (1998) who claim that learners have difficulty in the subject-verb agreement because Malay does not differentiate between persons and therefore it is not necessary for verbs to agree with the subject.

With regard to Research Question 8, findings revealed that there was a relationship between L2 proficiency and errors in writing. For Group A, L2 proficiency was negatively correlated with spelling and sentence errors. For Group B, L2 proficiency was correlated with word, tenses and sentence error. For Group C, no strong evidence of a relationship between L2 proficiency and writing errors could be seen.

However, there seems to be a trend toward a negative relationship between pronoun error, subject-verb agreement error, sentence error and L2 proficiency.

With regard to the relationship between L2 proficiency and TTR (Research Question 9), findings in this thesis revealed that there is no significant relationship between lexical diversity (measured through TTR) and vocabulary size scores. Several explanations may account for this finding. First, the measure used to represent L2 proficiency in this study was a receptive vocabulary test and not a productive vocabulary test. The lack of correlation between participants' vocabulary size and lexical diversity could mean that in essays, participants use other words which are not included in the vocabulary size tests. It seems reasonable to argue that the participants in this study do not use all of their recognition vocabulary knowledge when writing. As Laufer's (1988) study revealed, a learner may be able to produce a word on a test but may avoid using the word while writing. In addition, the receptive vocabulary task is an isolated vocabulary measure; examining students' vocabulary use in a writing task is very different, where students have to juggle the broader cognitive and linguistic demands of the writing task at the same time as demonstrating their vocabulary skills. Second, in the essay task, students were restricted to talking about one topic (and staying on topic) so there is a limited chance to demonstrate breadth of vocabulary which is what the TTR measures.

With regard to the relationship between text length (number of words produced) and vocabulary size, findings in this study revealed that there is a correlation between vocabulary test 3 and text length for Group A. However, no correlations were found between vocabulary tests and text length for Groups B and C. Several justifications may

account for this unexpected finding. First, vocabulary size is only one aspect of language development. The number of words produced in an essay is also likely to be influenced by wider cognitive and linguistic factors such as ideas generation and grammatical skill, which is key for being able to produce complex sentence structure. It is argued that participants in Groups B and C, whose academic experience exceeds participants in Group A, are more able to come up with complex sentence structure due to differences in their cognitive and metacognitive abilities. As Chenowith and Hayes (2001) advocated, during text production in L2, a series of cognitive processes are carried out by the writer. These processes include idea generation, sentence construction, sentence editing and revision. All the input that is selected in text production is inherently influenced by the linguistic knowledge stored in the writer's long term memory and text production involves the interplay between components in the process level and resource level such as linguistic proficiency, general knowledge and process of reading. Therefore, it seems plausible that components in a writer's long term memory such as general knowledge and linguistic proficiency influence the number of words produced by the students. Second, the use of specific vocabulary and/or ellipsis may decrease the number of words but actually increase the writing quality. Since participants in Groups B and C had larger vocabulary size compared to participants in Group A, they were more capable of producing accurate expressions in their writing and use specific vocabulary.

## 5.5 Conclusions

Generally, the findings in this study support the views of Cumming (1989) that stated a higher level of L2 proficiency was associated with higher ratings on content, organisation and language use. The current study found that higher vocabulary knowledge was related to higher writing performance. Similarly, the findings on the role of L2 proficiency in the use of strategy were consistent with Sasaki's (2000) who argued that L2 proficiency appeared to explain part of the differences in strategies. This study found that L2 proficiency, writing performance and writing strategies were interrelated and that the use of effective strategies was determined by the level of L2 proficiency. Based on these findings, it is suggested that L2 proficiency, particularly vocabulary knowledge, be emphasised in L2 writing instructions.

Aside from L2 proficiency being one the most significant factors in writing, the findings also argue for the need to emphasise effective writing strategies in the ESL writing classroom. One of the findings in this study found that the strategy of checking one's mistake and learning from them proved to be effective for certain groups of participants. This is consistent with Chandrasegaran's (1986) work which claims that self correcting of errors facilitated by teacher input improved error detection. Based on this finding, it is suggested that L2 writing teachers guide students to practice effective writing strategies by providing detailed explanation on how to practice the said strategies. This includes training of the writing conventions and the effective writing techniques pertaining to academic English writing that may help students in their performance. With regard to errors in writing, the findings in this thesis are consistent with Darus & Khor's (2009) work which proposed that the common errors among Malaysian students are tenses and subject-verb agreement.



## CHAPTER 6

### GENERAL DISCUSSION

#### 6.1 Overview of findings

This thesis investigated the contributing factors of L2 writing among adult ESL learners in the academic setting. This was done by examining the relationship between L2 proficiency, writing strategies, writing attitude, writing errors and L2 writing performance. The primary aim of this thesis is to provide evidence and insights for the contributing factors that are predictive of L2 writing performance in adult ESL learners, studying in English and non-English dominant settings. These insights can be used to inform the pedagogical approach that can be applied in ESL writing instructions within the Malaysian and New Zealand contexts, as well as suggests appropriate measures for investigating L2 writing strategies. This thesis presents the findings of three studies that included a total of 198 ESL learners studying in pre-degree programmes. All Malaysian participants had been exposed to English from the beginning of their schooling year (at approximately 7 years old), while ESL learners studying in New Zealand had varying degrees of English exposure.

Study 1 focused on determining the appropriate measures for investigating the individual factors of writing performance; particularly learners' writing strategies, learners' second language proficiency, first language (L1) interference and their relation to writing performance. Thirty-one intermediate students of L2 served as participants. The measures used to assess the variables in this study were: 1) A Writing Strategies Questionnaire, 2) Vocabulary Tests and 3) Essay Writing prompt. The questionnaire,

sourced from Petric and Czarl (2003) was used to tap information regarding participants' use of strategy during the composing process. The receptive vocabulary test sourced from Nation (1993) was used to assess participants' level of L2 proficiency. Finally, the essay writing task was carried out to measure participants' writing performance.

Descriptive analysis of participants' writing strategies (for Group 1 and 2) indicated that most of the participants' planning strategies were limited to having a mental or written plan. With regard to drafting strategies, findings indicated that over half of the participants would start their essays with an introduction and were more likely to stop drafting after a few sentences. Most respondents reread what they had written to get ideas on how to continue their essay but did not go back to their outline to make changes in it. With regard to the use of L1, it was found that a majority of respondents do not write bits of text in their native language. However, quite a number of participants indicated that they would write in their L1 if they don't know a word in English. Overall, findings from Study 1 suggested that participants' biggest concerns were related to grammar and vocabulary in writing. With regard to revising strategies, participants were more prone to making changes in vocabulary and sentence structure but not essay structure and content. This suggests that participants were more concerned about surface level changes and mistakes when writing.

In terms of writing output, an overall analysis of participants' essay indicated that there was not enough variation or breadth that could allow for a comprehensive assessment using an analytic rating scale. This argues for a revision in the writing prompt which includes lengthening the time duration for the writing task that will allow for a more comprehensive output. In addition to the change in the writing prompt, an

elaborate revision process was also done to improve the writing strategies questionnaire used in Study 1. This included rewording and rephrasing ambiguous items, removing irrelevant items from the questionnaire and restructuring the writing task for the next study.

Study 2 focused on L2 writers' proficiency level, writing attitude, writing errors and writing strategies in an English-dominant setting. The function of these variables in writing performance was explored by measuring the correlations between writing attitude scores, errors in writing, strategy use and essay scores. Nine research questions were designed to guide the study framework and gather specific data regarding the research aims. Some questions from Study 1 were repeated in the current study while the rest were elicited through enquiries developed over the previous work. Findings from Study 2 indicated that L2 proficiency, particularly vocabulary size, was related to writing performance. Additionally, results from Study 2 also argued that certain writing strategies which may be effective for certain groups of L2 writers might not be as effective for others, due to differences in L2 proficiency. Therefore, it was concluded that linguistic barriers in L2 affect both writing performance and students' ability in applying the effective strategies in writing. With regard to L1 use, Study 2 found that the use of L1 and translation into L2 was associated with lower writing performance. Additionally, Study 2 found that pronoun, word and sentence errors were the most prevalent errors among ESL students. A possible reason for this is because L2 students need to work with two languages while writing, mainly the grammar rules in English which are not found in their own L1. Thus, L2 students face the challenge of working out English grammar rules while writing. Overall, findings in this study suggest that prevalent writing errors in English may be a sign of L1 interference and that as the use

of L1 increases, writing performance decreases.

Study 3 focused on L2 writers' proficiency level, writing attitude, writing errors and writing strategies in a non-English dominant setting. The role of these variables in writing performance was explored by measuring the relationship between writing attitude scores, errors in writing, strategy use and essay scores. In addition, the role of L2 proficiency in writing performance was investigated by assessing the relationship between vocabulary size scores, writing errors and writing performance. Some of the research questions were repeated from Study 1 and 2 to allow for comparisons of findings between the three studies in this thesis. Analysis of the data yielded quite revealing result, since the different levels of vocabulary knowledge correlated with the scores given to the essays for all sample groups: participants were divided into three groups based on background within the educational institution where they were studying. Findings from Study 3 argue that L2 proficiency is one the most significant predictors in L2 writing as it not only determines how well L2 learners can perform but also what type of writing strategies they are capable of applying. Therefore, the third study in this thesis argues for the need to emphasize effective writing strategies in the ESL writing classroom.

With regard to the use of L1 in L2 writing, mixed results were found for the three groups in Study 3. For Groups A and C, no correlation was found between the use of L1 and writing performance, whereas for Group B a trend towards a relationship between the use of L1 and writing performance was found. Although the correlations for Group B were non-significant, they were overall negative. One possible reason for the inconsistency of results between Groups A, B and C is because participants in this

study have different levels of L2 proficiency and academic experience and thus possess different orientations of L1 use in writing. As reported in several studies, which attempted to relate L1 use to text quality and L2 proficiency, there seem to be important differences in L1 use between writers. For example, Wang (2003) reported that high proficiency writers switched more between L1 and L2 than low proficiency writers. Additionally, Sasaki (2002, 2004) discovered that novice writers translate more often from L1 to L2 than expert writers, and that novices also continue to do so over time (Sasaki 2004). Wolfersberger (2003) also found that low proficiency writers frequently use L1 during pre-writing and make use of translating from L1 to L2 in order to compensate for their limited ability to write in L2. Although no conclusive findings regarding the effect of L1 use can be gathered from the study, the trend towards a negative relationship between L1 use and writing performance among participants in Group B suggests that this area needs further investigation.

With regard to writing errors, findings in Study 3 indicated a relationship between errors and writing performance. It was discovered that subject verb agreement error appeared to be a factor that was related to writing performance for all three groups, whereas word error was a common factor for Group B and C. In addition, errors were also significantly correlated with L2 proficiency, suggesting that as L2 proficiency increased, errors decreased. One unexpected finding of Study 3 is the lack of correlation between vocabulary size and lexical diversity measured through TTR. One possible reason for this is because TTR is a function of sample size while the VLT is an objective measure of participants' vocabulary knowledge. As some literature have suggested (see P. Duran et al, 2004) larger samples of words tend to give a lower TTR. Therefore, it is plausible that participants in Study 3 who received a high score in the

VLT, produced higher token of words in writing but scored lower TTR. Another limitation of using TTR as a measure of lexical diversity is that it was originally designed as an oral language measure typically used in spontaneous or conversational language samples. Furthermore, TTR has been found to be a better measure of overall vocabulary development at the early stage of oral language development (for example, before sentence structure gets more complex and a lot of grammatical words are used). Therefore, a different measure of lexical diversity should be considered in future studies. Overall, Study 3 argues for the importance of developing and enhancing learners' L2 proficiency to reduce errors and improve learners' writing performance.

## **6.2 Comparisons across Studies 2 and 3**

The use of L1 in writing has been said to have an effect on writing and the frequency of using L1 in the writing process itself is a strong predictor of writing performance. Findings in Study 2 found that only a small number of participants would write bits of text in L1. Meanwhile a majority of participants in Groups A, B and C in Study 3 think about ideas in their native language. However, when it comes to writing an outline in L1 only a small number of participants would do so. With regard to the relationship between writing performance and the use of L1, findings in Study 2 revealed that as the use of L1 in the writing process increased, writing performance decreased. In comparison, findings in Study 3 indicated that there was a trend for a relationship between L1 use and writing performance for participants in Group B. The negative relationship is consistent with that of Study 2, which suggests that as the use of L1 increased, writing performance decreased. The findings in Study 2 and 3 suggest that

the poor performance of L2 writers could be attributed to the lack of L2 proficiency skills.

These findings provide preliminary support for the Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis which claims that second language learners will have difficulty with aspects (structures, or vocabulary) which differ from their first language. Structural differences between English and Malay have been shown to interfere with the learning and acquisition of English as a second language. Among common structural problems L2 students face are subject-verb agreement, the copula 'be' and tenses error (Tan, 2005). These errors are common among Malaysian students as the grammar rules are not found in the Malay language system and therefore students find it hard to learn English grammar structure. Research done on the writings Malaysian learners has revealed that many students are weak in grammar. These studies have shown that Malaysian learner have the tendency to commit recurrent writing errors such as spelling mistakes, wrong use of prepositions, subject verb agreement, word choice, concord and tenses (see Khan, 2005; Lim, 1976; Vahdatinejad, 2008).

*“.....the student who comes in contact with a foreign language will find some features of it quite easy and others extremely difficult. Those elements that are similar to his native language will be simple for him, and those elements that are different will be difficult.”*

Lado (1957:2)

A comparison of writing errors in Studies 2 and 3 revealed that as errors in writing increased, writing performance decreased. For Study 2, it was found that pronoun, word and sentence errors were the most prevalent among the participants. Meanwhile for Study 3, it was discovered that subject verb agreement error was the most prevalent among the participants. A comparison of findings from Studies 2 and 3

revealed that pronoun errors, spelling errors, word errors, subject verb agreement errors and sentence errors were related to writing performance. In other words, as these errors increased, writing performance decreased. Additionally, findings from Studies 2 and 3 also revealed that errors correlated negatively with vocabulary scores. This indicates that as learners' L2 proficiency increased, writing errors decreased. These findings provide preliminary support for the Contrastive Analysis hypothesis which claims that the differences between structures in L1 and L2 result in negative transfer. Although it can be hypothesised that some of the errors are due to dissimilarities of language rules between L1 and L2, further investigation is required to determine whether the writing errors found in Studies 2 and 3 are exclusively L1 related. In order to elucidate the relationship between L1 related errors and writing performance, future studies should employ a more specific categorisation of writing errors which are exclusively L1 related. It is critical that tasks are developed that differentiate normal writing errors and errors which are L1-related. Such a method will help to determine the occurrence and effects of L1 interference in L2 writing.

### **6.3 Implications**

The findings of this thesis have implications for the improvement of L2 writing from a practical and theoretical perspective. The first part of this discussion section will consider how the main findings lead to suggestions for practical work within the area of second language writing. The second part will focus on discussing theoretical issues, particularly in relation to second language writing research.



### ***6.3.1 Implications from a practical perspective***

One of the main issues stressed in this thesis is the importance of L2 proficiency in ESL writing performance. As this study argues, the development of L2 proficiency, particularly vocabulary skills, should be an essential element of L2 writing instruction. This finding is in agreement with that of Cummins (1979) Threshold Hypothesis which claims that a learner can transfer the writing skills in L1 to the writing of L2 only when his language proficiency reaches a certain level. In line with this view, this thesis argues for the importance of emphasizing the mastery of vocabulary knowledge at the tertiary level, as without sufficient amount of L2 proficiency, learners' ability in applying effective writing strategies will be affected later on. Although the knowledge that L2 proficiency is related to writing performance has been established in the previous literature, the current practice in ESL writing instructions at the tertiary level, particularly in Malaysia does not reflect this importance. The emphasis in the ESL writing lessons has always been on writing practice and the teaching of writing strategies. As this thesis argues, the level of L2 proficiency that a learner possesses not only makes a difference in his writing performance but also plays a role in strategy use. In other words, L2 proficiency can potentially determine the types of strategies the learners are capable of practicing and this in turn can potentially improve their writing performance. Therefore, this thesis argues for the need to emphasise vocabulary teaching during the ESL writing instructions so that learners could develop their vocabulary size and at the same time be aware that it is part of writing.

At the initial stages of writing it is suggested that ESL tutors place an emphasis on vocabulary so that the learners can be aware of the connection between vocabulary knowledge and writing. Laufer (1991, 1994) notes that it is beneficial for writing

instructors to teach vocabulary to students in an explicit manner in the early stages and beyond, since the results of skilled intervention will be seen in vocabulary development. Furthermore, as Lee (2003) argues, a clear and precise vocabulary instruction helps to transform recognition vocabulary into productive vocabulary in a writing task. Lee further adds that ESL learners have to be shown how to utilise their new learned vocabulary in a production task, and how lexical variation can have an impact on the quality of their writing. By placing an emphasis on vocabulary in writing instructions, ESL learners will be more accustomed to thinking of vocabulary as part of the writing process. It is also suggested that ESL practitioners try to practice and test vocabulary consistently. The words used in these tests can then be used in writing lessons, for example, getting students to use new words that they have learned in their essays. This suggestion is in agreement with Laufer and Paribakht's work (1998) who argue that the more students practice non-frequent words, the more often their receptive vocabulary will be activated.

In addition to the need to incorporate vocabulary in the writing lesson, the work in this thesis also argues for the need to practice effective writing strategies in ESL writing instructions. It is suggested that a thorough and informed training of writing strategies be integrated in the ESL classroom especially at the preliminary stage of writing instruction. Before the training, writing instructors should observe what strategies learners already possess, and then prepare lessons that include a range of successful writing strategies that they should be aware of. The completely informed training in itself can teach learners how and why to use, transfer, and evaluate the trained strategies (Oxford & Crookall, 1989).

As the findings in this thesis have shown, ESL learners with limited L2 proficiency were not able to apply writing strategies as effectively as those with higher L2 proficiency. Participants with lower level of L2 proficiency were more concerned with English surface-level strategies to the point that it hindered their focus on the content and organization within their essays. In addition, learners with lower L2 proficiency level produced fewer words than learners with higher L2 proficiency level. It is therefore recommended that procedural facilitation be included as part of the training framework to help weaker students reduce their cognitive loads when drafting essays in L2. Procedural facilitation is a procedure for revision, such as reading each sentence and thinking of an evaluative statement to follow each one (Bereiter and Scardamalia 1982). In order to apply this method, instructors can model their writing processes and strategy use by verbalizing them as they write to learners who need more elaborate instructions. This will demonstrate how the tutors are using strategies and train learners to pay attention on the more important aspects of writing.

Another pedagogical implication gathered from this thesis is the practical application of SALT in the ESL classroom. The present study is the first of its kind that utilises SALT to assess written language in ESL. Based on the findings of this thesis, it is argued that SALT can be used as a tool for written language assessment to measure students' writing development. Because of the flexibility of the tool in creating novel codes, different aspects of writing can be focused and assessed based on what an instructor wants to focus on. For example, an ESL instructor may use SALT to assess the development of basic writing skills such as the use of punctuations and capitalisations among low proficient students. In order to do this, suitable coding for these features can be developed in SALT so that an analysis on the frequency of errors

related to these features can be determined by the instructor. The analysis will then serve as an indicator of students' level of mastery in writing and help identify areas of which students are weak in. Additionally, the identification of errors and areas of weaknesses using SALT can also assist instructors in identifying suitable teaching goals for their writing class. Specific teaching objectives for each lesson can then be developed based on those goals and at the end of a teaching programme; assessments can be made to measure the effectiveness of teaching. This will not only inform the instructors on whether the teaching goals have been met, but it will also show a student's progress. Although a complete manual for using the tool is provided in the SALT software package, the new coding for writing errors such as Subject-Verb Agreement error and Spelling error was innovated from the present work. These codes and their description can be further developed into a coding manual to guide ESL writing instructors in using the tool and ensure that the coding is done in a standardised manner.

### ***6.3.2 Implications from a theoretical perspective***

L2 writers with the ability to communicate in two or three languages, as is the case of the participants in question, face cognitive challenges when it comes to academic writing. Compared to L1 writers, L2 writers have to acquire proficiency in the use of the language as well as writing strategies, techniques and skills in order to produce text in a second language. Among the various skills involved in text production, it is the act of composing that appears to be the most challenging for L2 writers. Brainstorming for new ideas in the L2 can be a very complex task as it entails the procedure of transforming or reworking information, which is much more difficult

than writing as telling. As Bereiter and Scardamalia (1987) argue, by putting together concepts and solving problems, the writer engages in "a two-way interaction between continuously developing knowledge and continuously developing text". It is at this stage that the writer draws upon information from internal memories such as long term memory to solve problems and put together ideas for the purpose of text production.

In Chapter 1, a model of text production taken from Chenowith and Hayes (2001) was presented to describe the framework of the current study. The model consists of three levels: a resource level, a process level, and a control level. The resource level is made up of the writer's internal memories and general processes that are drawn upon when a writer engages in a writing task. These memories include the writers' working memory and long term memory. The process level consists of internal processes and external environment of those processes. The internal processes are made up of a proposer, a translator, a reviser and a transcriber. The proposer works as a source that comes up with ideas by drawing upon information from the resource level. According to Chenowith and Hayes (2001:84), the translator "converts the prelinguistics ideas into strings of language with appropriate word order or grammar". The reviser then makes an assessment as to whether the proposed idea and written language are acceptable or not. If it is acceptable, the transcriber turns the content of the "articulatory buffer" into written language. The external environment of the processes consists of the task materials, the text written so far and the use of dictionaries. The control level consists of the task schema which includes the task goals and a set of productions that control the interactions among the processes. During text production, it is believed that the elements in the internal process and external environment interact with each other.

Based on the data derived from the present study, the original model taken from Chenowith and Hayes (2001) was slightly adapted to inform some key findings that are relevant to L2 writing production. Figure 6 presents an adapted version of the said model. Findings from the current work suggest that L2 learners with larger vocabulary size achieved higher writing performance scores than learners with lower vocabulary size. In addition, L2 learners who had lower vocabulary size also wrote shorter texts compared to those with larger vocabulary size. These results are interpreted as demonstrating the interactivity between the components in the resource level and process level. As explained in Chapter 1, during text production, the proposer, translator, reviser and transcriber can call on memories found in the resource level to perform various tasks. For example, during the pre writing stage, the translator can retrieve lexicographic and grammatical rules from the long term memory to produce strings of language. It is believed that higher scores in writing performance reflect an increase in the capacity of the translator to perform these tasks. It is also argued that the differences in the translator's capacity to come up with complex language structures and larger lexicon are a result of differences in long term memory, particularly the size of vocabulary. As Chenowith and Hayes (2001:94) argued,

*“As the translator’s facility with complex grammatical forms and lexical retrieval increases, cognitive resources are freed up so that the translator is able to apply more fully the writer’s sense of the grammar while proposing a string of language.”*

In contrast, learners with limited vocabulary size take more effort to retrieve lexical information in the long term memory to produce strings of language in L2. Due

to this constraint, learners with limited L2 proficiency, as is the case for Group A in Study 3, produced significantly fewer texts compared to the other groups. There are two points that might allow this model to explain these findings. First, it is reasonable to assume that learners with limited L2 proficiency take a longer time to produce text in L2 as they struggle with activities in the process level. These activities include the brainstorming of ideas by the proposer, the conversion of prelinguistic ideas into strings of language by the translator, the assessment of proposed language by the reviser and the transformation of articulatory buffer into written language by the transcriber. It is argued that the interaction between these four processes is more effective and productive when a sufficient level of L2 is achieved. As findings in Study 3 suggest, learners with lower L2 proficiency found the activities in the drafting stage the most difficult to carry out and the factor that stops them from writing is the act of generating ideas. This finding is in line with that of Scott (1996) which maintains that the process of idea generation and the use of long term memory are more complex in L2 composing process. Students are confused between long term memory information (ideas) on the topic and the language of expression. Therefore, by increasing the learners' proficiency level, cognitive load during the composing process will be reduced and this could lead to a more fluent text production.

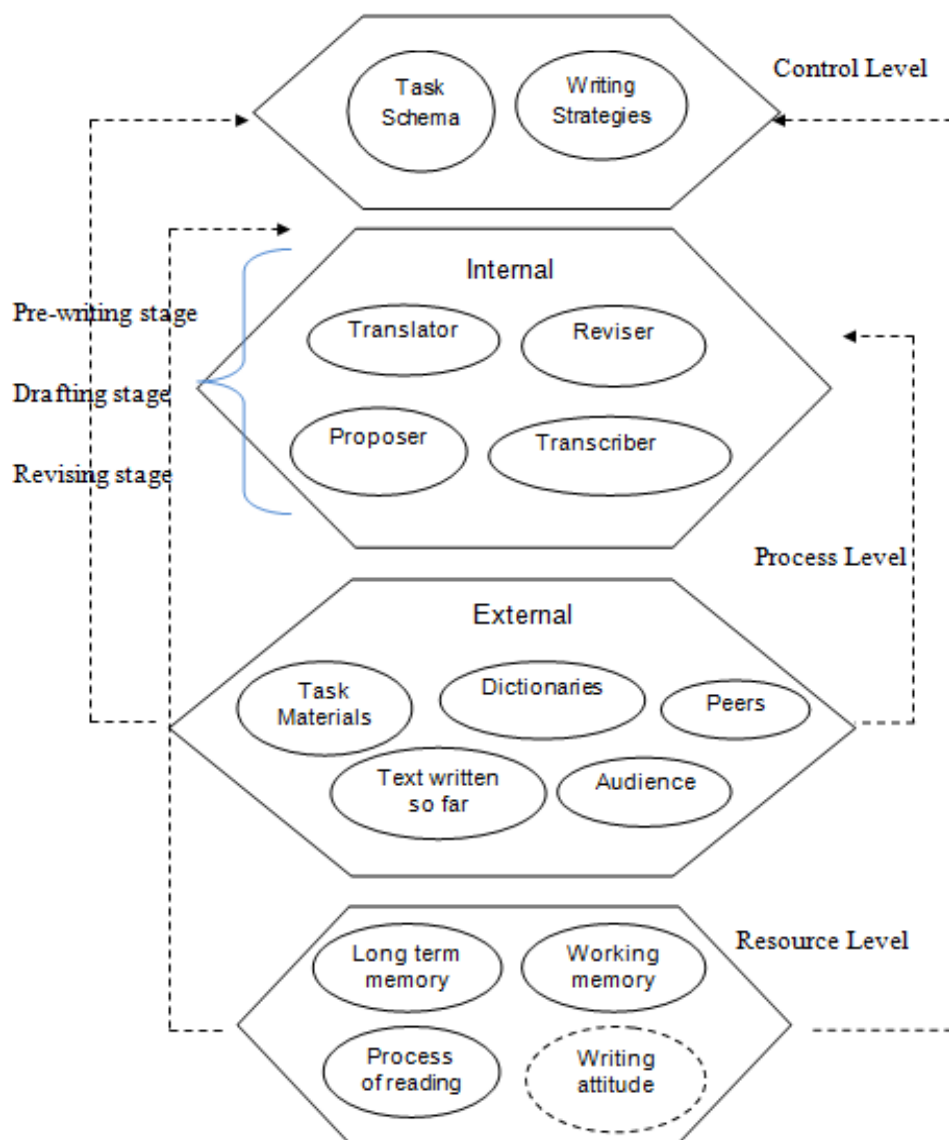
The second point is learners do not have sufficient level of L2 proficiency to evaluate their own writing effectively and correctly due to limitations in their lexicon. As the model suggests, during text production, the reviser interacts with the external environment such as the audience, the peer and the task written so far. The interaction with elements in the external environment helps the reviser to make good judgment of the proposed language and presumably reduce errors. However, if the elements in the

external environment are limited to only the task written so far, the reviser would need to rely on just the text and its own capacity to make sound evaluation. In the context of this thesis, if L2 learners do not possess the ability to facilitate complex grammatical forms, the revision process during text production will be ineffective. This explains why sentence errors were significantly more prevalent among L2 writers with lower vocabulary knowledge.

The results from this thesis also show that the use of writing strategies was related to L2 proficiency. Data derived from this thesis has shown that lower vocabulary scores were related to strategies that involved pausing, use of L1 and reliance on dictionary. This result is interpreted as demonstrating the interaction between elements in the resource level and control level shown in Figure 6. As Chenoweth and Hayes (2001) emphasized, the interactions in the model are consciously selected and would not be common for all types of writing tasks and writers. In other words, a writer chooses to apply a certain strategy or schema based on his own linguistic ability. In the context of this study, particularly for the low proficient writers, it is believed that the activation of writing strategies in the task schema depended on what seemed feasible by the translator and reviser during the composing process. Since writing was a difficult task for these writers, they chose to rely on L1 resources and dictionaries during the drafting stage. In addition, they also paused regularly to revise their text during the drafting stage. Therefore, it can be thought that learners with insufficient linguistic proficiency could not apply more demanding strategies such as brainstorming or drafting in the target language as they have to concentrate on the process of text production itself. This argument is in line with that of Aliakbari (2009) which found that higher language



proficiency was related to the use of more demanding strategies in L2 writing and that with higher proficiency, the learners' linguistic repertoire becomes more developed.



**Figure 6.** A model of written production (adapted from Chenowith and Hayes, 2001)

### 6.3.3 Implications for Theory Informing Practice

The overall findings from this thesis argue for the importance of L2 proficiency as a limiting factor that determines not only writing performance but also the use of

writing strategies during text production. In addition, findings from the work also suggest that writing attitude plays a role, albeit smaller, in the development of writing performance. As this thesis has argued, all three factors; L2 proficiency, writing strategies and writing attitude, are vital in L2 writing performance. However, of paramount importance to the development of writing skills is learners' level of L2 proficiency. This statement is particularly relevant for the intermediate or beginning writers at tertiary level education. Figure 10 illustrates the continuum of these predictors based on a hierarchy of importance. The three parts of the hierarchy are in this order: L2 proficiency, writing strategies, and writing attitude. L2 proficiency is defined as linguistic knowledge that entails lexicographic and grammar. As the findings in the present work suggest, a learner will not be able to acquire writing strategies effectively if a threshold level of linguistic knowledge is not achieved. Limited vocabulary prevents learners from applying strategies effectively as they are overwhelmed by the complex processes involved in text production. For example, an L2 learner who has been taught good revising strategies in a writing class may not be able to carry out the task effectively as he does not possess the ability to facilitate complex grammatical forms. In other words, his lack of L2 proficiency inhibits his capability to assess his writing and apply effective revision strategies. Therefore, the emphasis in an ESL writing class should be focused on developing learners' proficiency skills to build a strong foundation in writing.

Another implication that can be gathered from this thesis is the role of writing strategies in writing performance. Writing strategies as presented in the second tier of the pyramid in Figure 10 include a set of procedure or schemata used during the composing process. Examples of writing strategies in the context of this thesis are *make*

*an outline, reread sentences to see if they are well connected, and check grammar and spellings and think about tutor's expectations.* Research has shown that skills and strategies in L1 can be transferred to L2 writing once a sufficient level of L2 proficiency is acquired. As the findings in the current work have shown, higher L2 proficiency correlated positively with a number of writing strategies and it is also argued that these are the better writers in the study. Therefore, the current work argues that in order for a learner to improve his writing performance and ability, basic writing strategies must be learnt first. It is suggested that ESL writing tutors exhibit an explicit demonstration of the types of strategies good writers use when planning, drafting and revising texts. As Cumming (1995) advocates, cognitive modelling can be very beneficial in writing instructions. One of the ways ESL writing tutors can do this is by verbalising the writing process in a step-by-step manner during writing instructions. For instance, specific pre-writing strategies such as brain-storming, mind-mapping, and listing can be demonstrated to students through procedural facilitation.

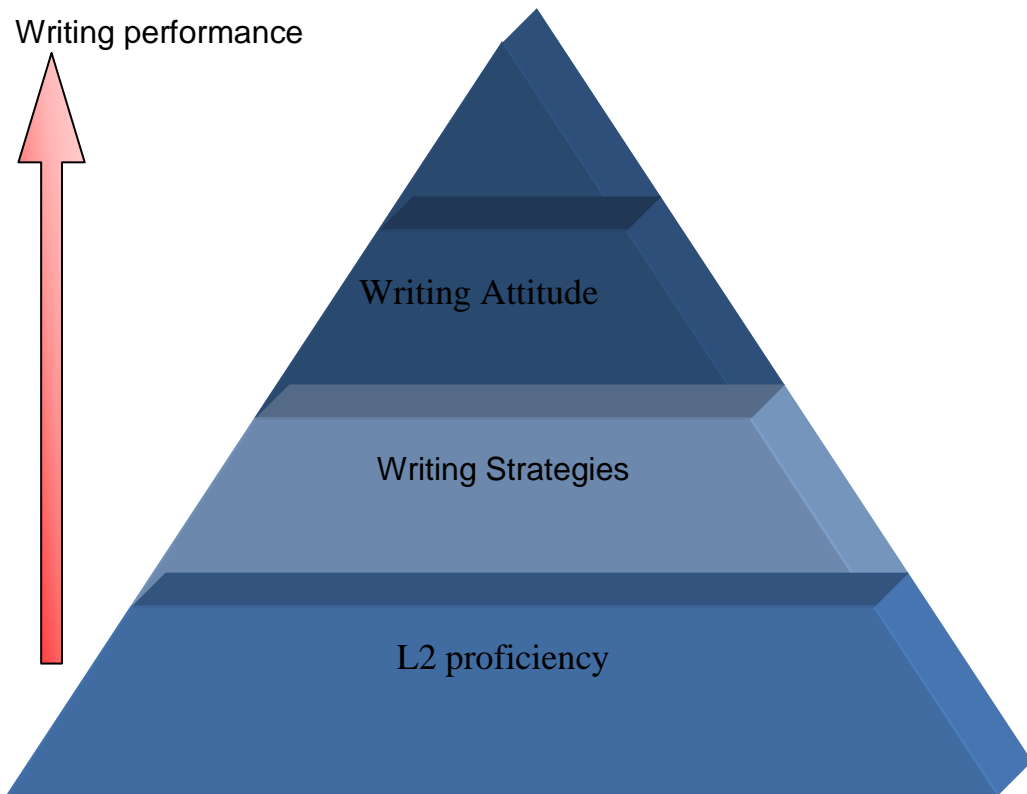
Apart from brainstorming, writing tutors could also use cognitive modelling to teach students to think about writing purposes, sense of audience and organisation of ideas before they start writing. These are strategies that most low-level proficiency writers neglect or are not familiar with. It is imperative that these basic techniques are taught effectively as they have the potential of improving the writing quantity and quality of L2 learners. As Flower (1994) maintained, writing ability can be fostered by supporting students with “a scaffold of prompts and explanations, by extensive modelling, by in-process approach and by reflection that connects strategic effort to outcomes” (p.142-143). Teaching students effective writing strategies in an explicit way can be highly beneficial for low-level proficiency students whose linguistic ability

impedes their writing ability. Of course, the key here is making sure that procedures are tailorable to the learner's level and needs.

At the highest level of the hierarchy is writing attitude. This plateau is made up of affective dispositions involving how the act of writing makes the writer feel. These dispositions can be described as writer's interests or feelings towards writing and writing anxiety. As findings in the literature suggest, social factors such as learners' writing attitudes, motivation and goals or purpose can explain the reasons for differences in L2 writing performance (Myers, 2002). In the present study, learners' writing attitude and anxiety were measured and correlated with writing performance. Consistent to other findings in the literature, it was found that writing attitude was indeed related to writing performance. Although the degree of significance varied from one group to another, the overall findings suggest that positive writing attitude could potentially promote the writing performance of L2 learners. Given the significance of writing attitude in L2 learners' writing performance and ability, the current work suggests that writing tutors provide L2 learners with a conducive writing environment that focuses on developing positive writing attitude. This includes reducing anxiety and developing writing self-efficacy during writing instructions.

Apart from focusing solely on developing positive writing attitude, writing tutors could also foster learners' motivation in the classroom. According to Dornyei (2001) motivation provides learners with a primary reason to initiate foreign language learning and writing with a purpose gradually improves students' interest in writing (Routman, 2000). Writing tutors can help foster positive writing attitude by helping students find an authentic purpose for their writing. This will guide them to connect

their own writing to a real purpose and a real audience. This effort should go hand in hand with the former suggestion of providing a conducive and nurturing writing environment for L2 learners. In order to do this, writing tutors need to carefully apply teaching techniques and approach that can attract students' interest and conduct lessons which are non-threatening. Journal writing activities for example, have been shown to reduce writing anxiety and develop students' perceived sense of writing abilities (Abdel-Sayed, 2007). Apart from being a non-threatening activity, journal writing also allows students to reflect on their thoughts and observations about topics that interest them. This gives them a sense of purpose to write and at the same time improves their writing fluency. Since it is not graded, journal writing allows students to write freely without being apprehensive about their performance. The tutors' role here is to provide positive feedback towards the students' reflection and writing effort in the form of positive and constructive comments. This will gradually motivate students to write regularly and in most cases develop a genuine interest in writing.



**Figure 7.** Individual factors of L2 Writing Performance

#### **6.4 Limitations of the work and future studies**

In order to evaluate the contribution of this thesis, a number of limitations need to be considered. These limitations can serve as a platform to develop future research in the same area as this study, which has focused on a number of contributing factors of L2 writing and their relative importance to writing performance. Additionally, one of the aims of this thesis was to investigate the relationship between L1 interference and writing performance. Although most of the research questions posed in Chapter 1 were answered, a few issues were not adequately addressed. This includes the influence of L1 in writing performance and the influence of affective factors on writing performance. This was due to time constraint and the already large number of analyses done in this study. As such, work focusing on developing a more comprehensive measure of assessing L1 interference and the investigation of other affective factors in writing such as writing self efficacy would be appropriate. Additionally, correlational studies between these variables and writing performance would also be beneficial for a better understanding of L2 writing predictors.

It is important to remember that the findings from this thesis were based on studies of adult ESL students at universities and colleges within the New Zealand and Malaysian contexts. Further work in the area should be carried out to determine whether the findings are generalisable to other contexts. As discussed in Chapter 2, English Language is taught not only in Malaysian primary and secondary schools, but also in private and public higher learning institutions. It is the principal language of instruction in private universities and used as the medium of instruction for subjects like Math and Science in Malaysian public universities. Given the importance of English at the tertiary

level education in Malaysia, it is suggested that future studies include larger sample size from a number of universities in Malaysia to allow for a greater level of generalisability across different contexts. Additionally, more substantive findings would contribute to the literature of L2 writing theory and practice.

Another factor that could be seen as a limitation is the broad classification of errors in the error analysis. As discussed in Chapter 1, one of the aims of this study was to investigate the existence of L1 interference in L2 writing. The error analysis done in the present work covered eleven types of language errors which aimed to elicit information regarding participants' writing problems as well as instances of L1 interference. Findings from the present work indicated that subject-verb agreement error was the most problematic for L2 learners and that lower L2 proficiency was related to higher instances of errors. Although this is an interesting finding, it did not provide a comprehensive picture as to what types of L1 interference are prevalent among L2 learners' writing text. Therefore, future studies should consider improving the current measures in order to achieve more comprehensive findings. One suggestion is to use contrastive analysis instead of error analysis to detect L1 interference in writing. This type of analysis has a more specific classification of errors constituting different types L1 interference such as translation, borrowings and word coinage from the first language. An example of each type of errors is shown in Table 49.

In addition to error analysis, future studies may also consider investigating the effect of L1 use on L2 writing performance. Findings from the literature suggest that the use of L1 in L2 writing may improve writing performance; particularly for low-level proficiency ESL learners (see Scott, 1996; Wang & Wen, 2002; Stapa & Abdul Majid, 2006; Yigzaw, 2012). Stapa and Abdul Majid (2006) who conducted a study on the



effects of L1 use in L2 writing process in a Malaysian classroom found that low-level proficiency ESL learners who use L1 for idea generation scored higher marks in content and overall writing scores. This finding is consistent with other studies in the literature which found that low-level L2 proficiency writers benefited from composing in L1. The present work however did not come to such conclusion as there were no conclusive findings on the effects of L1 interference on L2 writing performance. Future studies should consider investigating the effects of L1 in L2 writing classroom at different stages of the writing process, involving L2 learners of different proficiency levels. It will be interesting to discover whether the use of L1 in L2 writing only benefit low level ESL learners or intermediate ESL learners and even advanced ESL learners.

**Table 49. Types of writing errors related to L1 interference**

<b>Errors</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Example</b>
1. Borrowings	The adoption of English words into the vocabulary of the L1.	Loan word - universiti Correct word – university Example: As <u>universiti</u> (university) students, we have to work hard to get good grades.
2. Translation	The direct translation from the L1 (Malay) into the target language.	Malay word – utama (main) Correct word – capital Example: The university is located in the <u>main</u> city [bandar utama], Kota Kinabalu.
3. Word coinage	The creation of a new word/phrase/term which does not exist in the target language in order to convey the intended meaning.	Coined term – carry paper Correct term- to repeat a course Example: I will <u>carry paper</u> (repeat Some courses) next semester because I failed many subjects this semester.
4. Medium transfer	The use of L1 spelling system to spell words in the target language (in Malay, the spelling follows the pronunciation).	Medium transfer- intelijen Correct word-intelligent Example: My best friend is a very <u>intelijen</u> (intelligent) boy.
5. Language switch	The use of L1 to express something in the target language.	L1 word – perkakas L2 word – tool(s) Example: My dad has a lot of <u>perkakas</u> (tools) in his car.

Another method to consider is objective error identification tasks which requires the test takers to determine whether a sentence written in the L2 is correct or whether it is erroneous. Items in the test should include error-free sentences as well as erroneous sentences related to L1 interference. The ability to distinguish between correct and incorrect statements could be a good indicator of the learners' tendencies to make errors which are exclusively L1 related. The inclusion of this new method may offer a more conclusive and substantial insights into this area. An example of this task can be found in Appendix N.

Another limitation encountered by this thesis was the measures used to assess participants' writing attitude. Data gathered from the present work indicated that writing attitude was related to writing performance. However the strength of the relationship was lower than that for L2 proficiency. This is surprising because it might be expected that writing attitude should be as important as L2 proficiency. As previous findings in the literature have found (see Skibsniewski & Skibniewska, 1986; Graham, 2007) writing attitude was significantly related to writing performance. Furthermore, McKenna, Kear and Ellsworth (1995) posited that attitude may influence writing ability through its impact on factors. For instance, students with favourable attitude are likely to write more often and expend greater effort in writing than students with less favourable attitude. As Graham posited, individual differences in students' motivation predict writing performance and attitude is only one aspect of motivation. Further studies could investigate other affective factors which may be related to attitude such as writing self-efficacy. As Pajares and Johnston (1993) argued, writing self efficacy was related to writing performance and writing attitude. In order to investigate possible

mediating effects of writing self efficacy, regression analyses may be required and therefore a larger sample may be necessary in future studies.

Another suggestion is to improve the current measure of writing attitude. As the present work has shown, a majority of participants were not entirely clear about a number of statements found in the questionnaire. This was portrayed through the majority of “Not Sure” responses for a number of items in the questionnaire. One consideration is to provide a translated, Malay version of the writing attitude questionnaire for less proficient ESL learners. This could potentially aid the learners’ comprehension of the items and increase the precision of responses from them. An additional suggestion is to develop new writing attitude indicators through a survey. Items pertaining to attitude toward writing could be gathered by interviewing and observing students and teachers in an ESL writing class. The feedback from this survey can then be included as item indicators in the revised questionnaire. This could potentially make the measure highly relevant for the population. Some possibilities for the new items are: 1) I like getting writing assignments from my English lecturers. 2) Among all the skills in English, writing is the most difficult to learn. 3) In my opinion, writing is an important skill to master as a university student 5) I will not do any writing in my own time, unless my English lecturer gives me a writing assignment.

Further work may also consider investigating the effects of vocabulary intervention programme in L2 writing instructions. Given the importance of L2 proficiency in writing performance and its relation to writing strategy use, it is suggested that a comprehensive module of vocabulary intervention programme be implemented in the ESL classroom. At present, explicit focus on vocabulary in the teaching of English at the tertiary level is lacking in Malaysia. Although grammar is

being systematically covered, there is no similar plan for vocabulary (Syllabus, 2011). Hence, a programme which includes an explicit vocabulary instruction that suits learners' needs should be implemented. As Laufer (1991, 1994) argues, it might be a good idea to teach vocabulary to students in an explicit manner in the initial stages and beyond, since the effects of skilled intervention will be seen in vocabulary growth. The present work suggests a skilled intervention in the form of vocabulary lessons which are delivered systematically. It can be taught not only as an individual lesson but also integrated in the ESL writing instruction via vocabulary enrichment activities. The words used in the test can then be used in writing lessons, for example, getting students to use new words that they have learnt in their essays. This suggestion is in agreement with Laufer and Paribakht's work (1998) who comment that the more students practice non-frequent words, the more often their receptive vocabulary will be activated.

In addition, future studies may also consider exploring the relationships between receptive vocabulary, productive vocabulary and lexical diversity. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, participants' receptive vocabulary size (breadth) was not related to lexical diversity, which was measured through Type-Token Ratio (*TTR*). It was originally thought that vocabulary size was closely related to lexical diversity as it is an important indicator of language learners' active vocabulary. One possible explanation for the lack of correlation between receptive vocabulary and *TTR* is because *TTR* is a function of sample size while the *VLT* is an objective measure of participants' vocabulary knowledge. As P. Duran et al (2004) argue, larger samples of words will give a lower *TTR* and even commonly used measures derived from *TTR* which are claimed to be independent of sample size are problematic. Therefore, it is possible that a student who received a high score in the *VLT*, produced higher token of words in

writing and scored lower TTR. Another limitation of using TTR is because it was originally designed as an oral language measure typically used in spontaneous language samples. The essay context is very different in that students are limited to one – which detracts from being able to show breadth of vocabulary. Further, TTR has been found to be a better marker of vocabulary development at the early stages of oral language development. It is suggested that future studies consider including productive vocabulary measures to tap participants' vocabulary depth. Following this, relationships between vocabulary breadth, vocabulary depth and lexical diversity may be carried out. This may yield some useful insights into the explanations as to why receptive vocabulary measure was not related to lexical diversity.

Further work may also consider the usefulness of intervention procedures aimed to improve vocabulary for adult students from an ESL background. Oral language interventions can support the growth in vocabulary skills that can lead to gains in literacy (see Bowyer-Crane, Snowling, Duff, Fieldsend, Carroll, Miles, Götz & Hulme, 2008; Clarke, Snowling, Truelove & Hulme, 2010): focusing on vocabulary training shows benefits for those with weak language skills).

## 6.5 Conclusion

The ability to write well is an essential component of a student's academic skills. Among all the four skills in English, writing seems to be the most difficult one to master. This is especially true for L2 students who are not proficient in the target language and whose only source of L2 exposure is found in the ESL classroom. In order to discover what predicts good writing and the conditions in which writing skills can be taught optimally, the nature of L2 writing must first be understood. This can be achieved by looking at the process of writing and identifying individual factors that are relevant to the prediction of writing performance. This was exactly the purpose of this thesis since currently there is no common theory that governs the field of ESL writing in Malaysia or in other contexts of the world. Thus analysing the relationship between different factors in L2 writing in New Zealand and Malaysia with ESL students from various proficiency levels became the primary aim of the present work. This research aim was achieved through the three studies reported in this thesis.

From the studies carried out, the following conclusions were obtained. First, L2 proficiency is an important factor in L2 writing performance and plays a mediating role in a learner's capacity to use writing strategies effectively. Although other factors contribute to the differences in writing performance, L2 proficiency appears to be the most predictive variable. The suggestions given in this thesis should inform further development work on the role of L2 proficiency in writing, particularly vocabulary intervention in ESL writing instructions. Second, effective writing strategies are relevant to writing performance and they should be developed in line with learners' level of L2 proficiency. Good writing strategies alone do not seem to be sufficient for the development of writing performance. It is a synergy between L2 proficiency,

strategies and attitude that makes a good writer. The findings of the present work should inform current practice and theory, and prove useful for practitioners and future studies in the field of second language writing.



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## APPENDIX A

### Information Sheet for Research Participants

My name is Alice Wong, a PhD student in the College of Education, University of Canterbury and I am working under the supervision of Professor John Everatt (phone no 364 2987 ext 4003). I am researching a language teaching project that looks at the way ESL/ EFL learners write English essays and the writing behaviour that takes place during the writing process.

In class I will ask questions about your exposure to writing in English and your own writing process. For this purpose, I will give you a questionnaire which will elicit information regarding your background and your personal writing process style. I will use this information when I give presentations on this project or when I write my reports. Each of the students in this project will have a code name so no-one else will know who made the comments I will use in my report of this research.

Apart from giving you a questionnaire to be completed, I will also give you three writing tasks which will be done after class hours during three sessions. Each task will take 30 minutes. The assessment for this task will not affect the grade of your English course. This is done for the purpose of this project and your grade will not be affected in any way.

The reading and writing task will be held in one of the College of English tutorial rooms and each session will take about 30 minutes. There will be more than one session for these tasks and the schedule will be done according to your convenience and availability.

If you are happy to take part you will need to sign the consent form and return it to your lecturer/ tutor. If you wish to withdraw from this project you may do so without penalty. If you have any questions you can talk to your lecturer/ tutor.

- 
1. This project has received ethical approval from the Educational Research Human Ethics Committee.
  2. For further enquiries or information regarding this project you may contact Alice Wong at 3642987 ext 3542.
  3. Complaints may be addressed to:  
Dr Missy Morton, Chair, Educational Research Human Ethics Committee  
College of Education, University of Canterbury  
Private Bag 4800, CHRISTCHURCH

Telephone: 345 8312

## APPENDIX B

### Information Sheet for Academic Coordinator

My name is Alice Wong, a PhD student in the College of Education, University of Canterbury and I am working under the supervision of Professor John Everatt (phone no 364 2987 ext 4003). I am researching a language teaching project that looks at the way ESL/ EFL learners write English essays and the writing behaviour that takes place during the writing process.

In class I will ask questions about the students' exposure to writing in English and their own writing process. For this purpose, I will give them a questionnaire which will elicit information regarding their background and their personal writing process style. I will use this information when I give presentations on this project or when I write my reports. Each of the students will have a code name so no-one else will know who made the comments I will use in my report of this research.

Apart from giving students a questionnaire to be completed, I will also give them three writing tasks which will be done after class hours during three sessions. Each task will take 30 minutes. The assessment for this task will not affect the grade of the students' English course. This is done for the sole purpose of this project and their grades will not be affected in any way.

With your permission, I would like to use the students' English course grades to determine the level of English proficiency. For this purpose, I will make sure that their names remain confidential and not be used in presentation or report. I am hoping to use some of the students' class time for the completion of the writing tasks and collecting the research participant consent forms. I would also like to request for the tutor's assistance in distributing questionnaires and research participant consent forms. If you agree for the students in your institution to take part in the research, please sign the consent form below. I have also sent the participants a letter and consent form to sign.

As part of the University of Canterbury requirements, I will securely store the data of this project and destroy it after five years. If you have any questions about this project you can talk to me. If you have any complaints you may also contact the Chair of the Educational Research Human Ethics Committee; see contact details below. If any of the students in the project changes their mind about sharing their ideas with me, that's fine, too; all they have to do is say so.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

1. This project has received ethical approval from the Educational Research Human Ethics Committee.
2. For further enquiries or information regarding this project you may contact Alice Wong at 3642987 ext 3542.
3. Complaints may be addressed to:  
Dr Missy Morton, Chair, Educational Research Human Ethics Committee  
College of Education, University of Canterbury  
Private Bag 4800, CHRISTCHURCH Telephone: 345 8312

## APPENDIX C

### Information Sheet for Tutor

My name is Alice Wong, a PhD student in the College of Education, University of Canterbury and I am working under the supervision of Professor John Everatt (phone no 364 2987 ext 4003). I am researching a language teaching project that looks at the way ESL/ EFL learners write English essays and the writing behaviour that takes place during the writing process.

In class I will ask questions about the students' exposure to writing in English and their own writing process. For this purpose, I will give them a questionnaire which will elicit information regarding their background and their personal writing process style. I will use this information when I give presentations on this project or when I write my reports. Each of the students will have a code name so no-one else will know who made the comments I will use in my report of this research.

Apart from giving students a questionnaire to be completed, I will also give them a writing task and a vocabulary test. The assessment for these tasks will not affect the grade of the students' English course. This is done for the sole purpose of this project and their grades will not be affected in any way.

With your permission, I am hoping to use some of your class time for the completion of the writing tasks and collecting the research participant consent forms. I would also like to request for your assistance in distributing questionnaires and research participant consent forms. If you agree to assist me and allow me to use your class time, please sign the consent form below. I have also sent them a letter and consent form to sign.

As part of the University of Canterbury requirements, I will securely store the data of this project and destroy it after five years. If you have any questions about this project you can talk to me. If you have any complaints you may also contact the Chair of the Educational Research Human Ethics Committee; see contact details below. If any of the students wishes to withdraw from the project, that's fine, too; all they have to do is say so.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

1. This project has received ethical approval from the Educational Research Human Ethics Committee.
2. For further enquiries or information regarding this project you may contact Alice Wong at 3642987 ext 3542.
3. Complaints may be addressed to:  
 Dr Missy Morton, Chair, Educational Research Human Ethics Committee  
 College of Education, University of Canterbury  
 Private Bag 4800, CHRISTCHURCH Telephone: 345 8312

## APPENDIX D

### Student Consent Form

Ms. Wong has talked with me about the language teaching project she is working on this year.

- I have read or heard the information and am happy to take part in this project.
- I understand that comments I make may be written down and used in presentations and reports.
- I understand that my name will not be written down next to my comments and that my name will not be used in any presentations, reports or the video.
- I understand that I do not have to participate in any part of the discussion if I do not want to.
- I understand that the materials and feedback produced as part of this research are independent of my coursework.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

- 
1. This project has received ethical approval from the Educational Research Human Ethics Committee.
  2. For further enquiries or information regarding this project you may contact Alice Wong at 3642987 ext 3542.
  3. Complaints may be addressed to:  
 Dr Missy Morton, Chair, Educational Research Human Ethics Committee  
 College of Education, University of Canterbury  
 Private Bag 4800, CHRISTCHURCH Telephone: 345 8312

## APPENDIX E

### Writing Strategy Questionnaire – Study 1

#### Section 1: General Questions

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Class: \_\_\_\_\_

1. Sex (please tick): Male  Female

2. What is your native language? \_\_\_\_\_

3. How many months/ years have you been studying English? \_\_\_\_\_

4. Did you attend a course in writing in English before coming to this institution? Please circle.

YES / NO

5. How many times per week do you write the following in English? Please tick.

	0	1-3	4-6	7-9	10 or more
emails					
letters					
essay articles					
reports					
research paper					
creative writing					
business					
Diaries/ journals					

6. Do you like writing in English? Please tick.

I don't like it at all  I don't like it  I have no feeling about it

I like it  I like it a lot

7. Which activity/ stage of the writing process do you find most difficult to carry out? Please tick.

Pre-writing Stage (Before you start writing)

Writing (When writing/ drafting)

Revising (After writing/ Editing)

## Section 2: The Writing Process

In this part, you will find statements about the different stages of writing in English: before writing, while writing, and when revising.

Please read each statement and circle the number indicating **how true of you the statement is**.

1. Never or almost never true of me
2. Usually not true of me (less than half of the time)
3. Somewhat true of me (about half of the time)
4. Usually true of me (more than half of the time)
5. Always or almost always true of me

EXAMPLE:

<i>I eat snacks while watching tv.</i> If you eat snacks all the time when watching tv, or almost always, circle 5.	never true 1	usually not true 2	somewhat true 3	usually true 4	always true 5
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### 2.1 BEFORE I START WRITING AN ESSAY IN ENGLISH...

Please circle the appropriate number.

BEFORE I START WRITING AN ESSAY IN ENGLISH...	never true	usually not true	somewhat true	usually true	always true
1. I make a timetable for the writing process.	1	2	3	4	5
2. Before I start writing I revise the requirements (instructions	1	2	3	4	5
3. I look at a model written by a native speaker or more proficient writer.	1	2	3	4	5
4. I start writing without having a written or mental plan.	1	2	3	4	5
5. I think about what I want to write and have a plan in my mind, but not on paper.	1	2	3	4	5
6. I note down words and short notes related to the topic.	1	2	3	4	5
7. I write an outline of my paper.	1	2	3	4	5
8. I write notes or an outline in my native language.	1	2	3	4	5



## 2.2 WHEN WRITING IN ENGLISH...

Please circle the appropriate number.

WHEN WRITING IN ENGLISH...	never true	usually not true	somewhat true	usually true	always true
1. I start with the introduction.	1	2	3	4	5
2. I stop after each sentence to read it again.	1	2	3	4	5
3. I stop after a few sentences or a whole paragraph, covering one idea.	1	2	3	4	5
4. I reread what I have written to get ideas how to continue.	1	2	3	4	5
5. I go back to my outline and make changes in it.	1	2	3	4	5
6. I write bits of the text in my native language and then translate them into English.	1	2	3	4	5
7. I am always sure of my grammar and vocabulary in writing.	1	2	3	4	5
8. I simplify what I want to write if I don't know how to express my thoughts in English.	1	2	3	4	5
9. If I don't know a word in English, I write in my native language and later try to find an appropriate English word	1	2	3	4	5
10. If I don't know a word in English, I find a similar English word that I know.	1	2	3	4	5
11. If I don't know a word in English, I stop writing and look up the word in the dictionary.	1	2	3	4	5
12. I use a bilingual dictionary.	1	2	3	4	5
13. I use a monolingual dictionary.	1	2	3	4	5
14. I ask somebody to help out when I have problems while writing.	1	2	3	4	5

## 2.2 WHEN REVISING....

Please circle the appropriate number.

WHEN REVISING...	never true	usually not true	somewhat true	usually true	always true
1. I read my text aloud.	1	2	3	4	5
2. I only read what I have written when I have finished the whole paper.	1	2	3	4	5
3. When I have written my paper, I hand it in without reading it.	1	2	3	4	5
4. I use a dictionary when revising.	1	2	3	4	5
5. I make changes in vocabulary (making changes in the words that I have used)	1	2	3	4	5
6. I make changes in sentence structure.	1	2	3	4	5
7. I make changes in the structure of the essay (For	1	2	3	4	5

e.g. move paragraphs/ sections around)					
8. I make changes in the content or ideas.	1	2	3	4	5
9. I focus on one thing at the time when revising (e.g., content, structure)	1	2	3	4	5
10. I drop my first draft and start writing again.	1	2	3	4	5
11. I check if my essay matches the requirements.	1	2	3	4	5
12. I leave the text aside for a couple of days and then I can see it in a new perspective.	1	2	3	4	5
13. I show my text to somebody and ask for his/her opinion.	1	2	3	4	5
14. I compare my paper with the essay written by my friends on the same topic.	1	2	3	4	5
15. I give myself a reward for completing the assignment.	1	2	3	4	5
16. I check my mistakes after I get back the paper with feedback from the teacher, and try to learn from them.	1	2	3	4	5

## APPENDIX F

### Vocabulary Test – Study 1

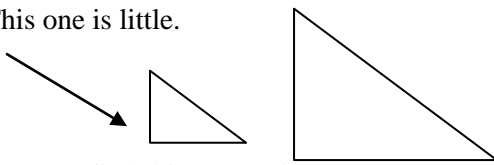
NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

Write **T** if a sentence is true. Write **N** if it is not true. Write **X** if you do not understand the sentence. The first one has been answered for you.

E.g. We cut time into minutes, hours and days.

**T**

1. This one is little.



\_\_\_\_\_

2. You can find this everywhere.



\_\_\_\_\_

3. Some children call their mother mama.

\_\_\_\_\_

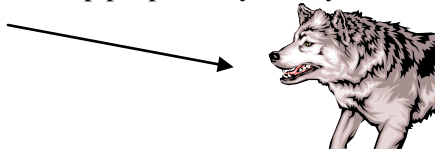
4. Show me the way to do it means show me how to do it.

\_\_\_\_\_

5. This country is a part of the world.

\_\_\_\_\_

6. This can keep people away from your house.



\_\_\_\_\_

7. When something falls, it goes up.

\_\_\_\_\_

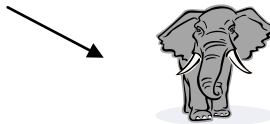
8. Most children go to school at night.

\_\_\_\_\_

9. It is easy for children to remain still.

\_\_\_\_\_

10. One person can carry this.



\_\_\_\_\_

11. A scene is a part of a play.

\_\_\_\_\_

12. People often think of their home when they are away from it.

\_\_\_\_\_

13. There is a mountain in every city.

\_\_\_\_\_

14. Each month has the same number of days.

\_\_\_\_\_

15. A chief is the youngest person in the group. \_\_\_\_\_

16. Black is a colour \_\_\_\_\_

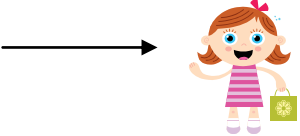
17. You can use a pen to make marks on paper. \_\_\_\_\_

18. A family always has at least two people. \_\_\_\_\_

19. You can go by road from London to New York. \_\_\_\_\_

20. Silver costs a lot of money. \_\_\_\_\_

21. This is a hill.  \_\_\_\_\_

22. This young person is a girl.  \_\_\_\_\_

23. We can be sure that one day we will die. \_\_\_\_\_

24. A society is made up of people living together. \_\_\_\_\_

25. An example can help you to understand. \_\_\_\_\_

26. Some books have picture in them. \_\_\_\_\_

27. When some people attack other people, they try to hurt them. \_\_\_\_\_

28. When something is ancient it is very big. \_\_\_\_\_

29. Big ships can sail up a stream. \_\_\_\_\_

30. It is good to keep a promise. \_\_\_\_\_

31. People often dream when they are sleeping. \_\_\_\_\_

32. This is a date – 10 o'clock \_\_\_\_\_

33. When something is impossible, it is easy to do. \_\_\_\_\_


34. Milk is blue. \_\_\_\_\_

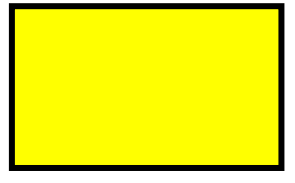
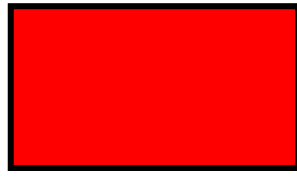
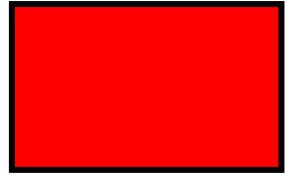
35. A square has five sides. \_\_\_\_\_

36. Boats are made to travel on land. \_\_\_\_\_

37. Cars cannot pass each other on a wide road. \_\_\_\_\_

38. When you look at something closely, you can see the details. \_\_\_\_\_

39. This part is a handle.  \_\_\_\_\_

**APPENDIX G****Colour Naming Task**

## APPENDIX H

### ESL Composition Profile by Jacobs et al. (1981)

SCORE	RANGE	CONTENT CRITERIA
	25-22	EXCELLENT TO VERY GOOD: knowledgeable • substantive • thorough development of thesis • relevant to assigned topic
	21-18	GOOD TO AVERAGE: some knowledge of subject • adequate range • limited development of thesis • mostly relevant to topic, but lacks detail
	17-11	FAIR TO POOR: limited knowledge of subject • little substance • inadequate development of topic
	10-5	VERY POOR: does not show knowledge of subject • non-substantive • not pertinent • OR not enough to evaluate
		<b>ORGANIZATION CRITERIA</b>
	20-18	EXCELLENT TO VERY GOOD: fluent expression • ideas clearly stated/ supported • succinct • well-organized • logical sequencing • cohesive
	17-14	GOOD TO AVERAGE: somewhat choppy • loosely organized but main ideas stand out • limited support • logical but incomplete sequencing
	13-10	FAIR TO POOR: non-fluent • ideas confused or disconnected • lacks logical sequencing and development
	9-7	VERY POOR: does not communicate • no organization • OR not enough to evaluate
		<b>VOCABULARY CRITERIA</b>
	20-18	EXCELLENT TO VERY GOOD: sophisticated range • effective word/idiom choice and usage • word form mastery • appropriate register
	17-14	GOOD TO AVERAGE: adequate range • occasional errors of word/idiom form, choice, usage but meaning not obscured
	13-10	FAIR TO POOR: limited range • frequent errors of word/idiom form, choice, usage • meaning confused or obscured
	9-7	VERY POOR: essentially translation • little knowledge of English vocabulary, idioms, word form • OR not enough to evaluate
		<b>LANGUAGE USE CRITERIA</b>
	25-22	EXCELLENT TO VERY GOOD: effective complex constructions • few errors of agreement, tense, number, word order/function, articles, pronouns, prepositions
	21-18	GOOD TO AVERAGE: effective but simple constructions • minor problems in complex constructions • several errors of agreement, tense, number, word order/function, articles, pronouns, prepositions but meaning seldom obscured
	17-11	FAIR TO POOR: major problems in simple/complex constructions • frequent errors of negation, agreement, tense, number, word order/function, articles, pronouns, prepositions and/or fragments, run-ons, deletions • meaning confused or obscured
	10-5	VERY POOR: virtually no mastery of sentence construction rules • dominated by errors • does not communicate • OR not enough to evaluate
		<b>MECHANICS CRITERIA</b>
	10-9	EXCELLENT TO VERY GOOD: demonstrates mastery of conventions • few errors of spelling, punctuation, capitalization, paragraphing
	8-7	GOOD TO AVERAGE: occasional errors of spelling, punctuation, capitalization, paragraphing but meaning not obscured
	6-5	FAIR TO POOR: frequent errors of spelling, punctuation, capitalization, paragraphing • poor handwriting • meaning confused or obscured
	3-4	VERY POOR: no mastery of conventions • dominated by errors of spelling, punctuation, capitalization, paragraphing • handwriting illegible • OR not enough to evaluate

## APPENDIX I

### Jigsaw Reading Task 1

#### Instructions:

Arrange the jumbled-up paragraphs to form a cohesive essay. The order of the essay should follow this sequence: Introduction – Body (Body of paragraph 1, 2 and 3) – Conclusion.

#### Student Zombies

<p>Zombies are controlled by some mysterious force. According to legend, real zombies are corpses that have been brought back to life to do the bidding of a voodoo master. Student zombies, too, seem directed by a strange power. They continue to attend school although they have no apparent desires to do so. They show no interest in college-related activities like tests, grades, papers and projects. And yet some inner force compels them to wander through the halls of higher education.</p>	
<p>Schools divide people into categories. From first grade on up, students are labeled “advanced” or “deprived” or “remedial” or “antisocial”. Students pigeonhole their fellow students, too. We’ve all known the “brain”, the “jock”, the “dummy”, and the “teacher’s pet”. In most cases, these narrow labels are misleading and inaccurate. But there is one label for certain type of college student that says it all: “zombie”</p>	
<p>Every college student knows that it is not necessary to see Night of the Living Dead or The Dead don’t Die to see zombies in action-or nonaction. Forget the campus film series or the late-show. Just sit in a classroom and wait. You know what you’re looking for – the students who walk in without books or papers and sit in the very last row of seats. The ones with personal stereos plugged into their ears don’t count as zombies-that’s a whole different category of “student”. Day of the Living Dead is showing every day at a college near you.</p>	
<p>An awful fate awaits all zombies unless something happens to break the spell they’re under. In the movies, zombies are often shot, stabbed, drowned, electrocuted, and run over by large vehicles, all to no avail. Finally the hero or heroine realizes that a counterspell is needed. Once that spell is cast, with the appropriate props of chicken feet, human hair, and bats’ eyeballs, the zombie-corpse can return peacefully to its coffin. The only hope for a student zombie to change is for him or her to undergo a similar traumatic experience. Sometimes the evil spell can be broken by a grade transcript decorated with large “Fs”. At other times, a professor will succeed through private, intensive exorcism session. But in other cases zombies blunder around for years until they are gently persuaded by the college administration to head for another institution. Then they enrol in a new college or get a job in the family business.</p>	
<p>Zombies are the living dead. Most of us haven’t known a lot of real zombies personally, but we do know how they act. We have horror movies to guide us. The special effects in horror movies are much better these days. Over the years, we’ve learned from the movies that zombies stalk around graveyards , their eyes glued open by Hollywood makeup artists, bumping like cheap toy robots into living people. Zombie students in college do just about the same thing. They stalk around campus, eyes glazed, staring off into space. When they do manage to wander into a classroom, they sit down mechanically and contemplate the ceiling. Zombie students rarely eat, dance, talk, laugh, or toss Frisbees on campus lawns. Instead, they vanish when class is dismissed and return only when some mysterious zombie signal summons them back into a classroom. The signal may not occur for weeks.</p>	

## APPENDIX J

### Jigsaw Reading Task 2

#### Instructions:

Arrange the jumbled-up paragraphs to form a cohesive essay. The order of the essay should follow this sequence: Introduction – Body (Body of paragraph 1, 2 and 3) – Conclusion.

#### The Benefits of Television

<p>Most important, television is educational. Preschoolers learn colours, number, and letters from public television programmes, like Sesame Street that use animation and puppets to make learning fun. On the Discovery Channel, science shows for older children go on location to analyze everything from volcanoes to rocket launches. Adults, too, can get an education (college credits included) from courses given on television. Also, television widens our knowledge by covering important events and current news. Viewers can see and hear presidents' speeches, state funerals, natural disasters, and election results as they are happening.</p>	
<p>In addition to being relaxing, television is entertaining. Along with the standard comedies, dramas, and game shows that provide enjoyment to viewers, television offers a variety of movies and sports events. Moreover, viewers can pay a monthly fee and receive special cable programming or Direct TV. Viewers can watch first-run movies, rock and classical music concerts, and specialized sports events, like international soccer and Grand Prix racing. Viewers can also buy or rent movies and TV shows on DVD. Still another growing area of TV entertainment is video games. PlayStation, Xbox and Nintendo consoles allow the owner to have a video-game arcade in the living room.</p>	
<p>We hear a lot about the negative effects of television on the viewer. Obviously, television can be harmful if it is watched constantly to the exclusion of other activities. It would be just as harmful as to listen to CDs all the time or to eat constantly. However, when TV is watched in moderation, it is extremely valuable, as it provides relaxation, entertainment and education.</p>	
<p>Perhaps because television is such a powerful force, we like to criticize it and search for its flaws. However, the benefits of television should not be ignored. We can use television to relax, to have fun, and to make ourselves smarter. This electronic wonder, then, is a servant, not a master.</p>	
<p>First of all, watching TV has the value of sheer relaxation. Watching television can be soothing and restful after an eight-hour day of pressure, challenges, or concentration. After working hard all day, people look forward to a new episode of a favourite show or yet another showing of Casablanca or Anchorman. This period of relaxation leaves viewers refreshed and ready to take on the world again. Watching TV also seems to reduce stress in some people. This benefit of television is just beginning to be recognized. One doctor, for example, advises his patients with high blood pressure to relax in the evening with a few hours of television.</p>	



## APPENDIX K

### Vocabulary Test-Study 2

**Full Name :** \_\_\_\_\_ **Class:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Instructions:** *This is a vocabulary test. Choose the right word to go with each meaning. Write the number of that word next to its meaning. Here is an example.*

- |   |          |       |                            |
|---|----------|-------|----------------------------|
| 1 | business |       |                            |
| 2 | clock    | _____ | part of a house            |
| 3 | horse    | _____ | animal with four legs      |
| 4 | pencil   | _____ | something used for writing |
| 5 | shoe     |       |                            |
| 6 | wall     |       |                            |

*You answer it in the following way.*

- |   |          |          |                            |
|---|----------|----------|----------------------------|
| 1 | business |          |                            |
| 2 | clock    | <u>6</u> | part of a house            |
| 3 | horse    | <u>3</u> | animal with four legs      |
| 4 | pencil   | <u>4</u> | something used for writing |
| 5 | shoe     |          |                            |
| 6 | wall     |          |                            |

*Some words are in the test to make it more difficult. You do not have to find a meaning for these words. In the example above, these words are business, clock, shoe.*

#### PART 1

<b>1</b>	1 birth 2 dust        _____ game 3 operation    _____ winning 4 row         _____ being born 5 sport 6 victory	<b>6</b>	1 adopt 2 climb        _____ go up 3 examine     _____ look at closely 4 pour         _____ be on every side 5 satisfy 6 surround
<b>2</b>	1 choice 2 crop         _____ heat 3 flesh        _____ meat 4 salary       _____ money paid 5 secret        _____ regularly 6 temperature    _____ for doing a job	<b>7</b>	1 bake 2 connect     _____ join together 3 inquire      _____ walk without 4 limit         _____ purpose 5 recognize    _____ keep within a 6 wander        _____ certain size
<b>3</b>	1 cap 2 education    _____ teaching and 3 journey      _____ learning 4 parents      _____ numbers 5 scale         _____ to measure with 6 trick         _____ going to a far place	<b>8</b>	1 burst 2 concern     _____ break open 3 deliver      _____ make better 4 fold         _____ take something to 5 improve     _____ someone 6 urge

<b>4</b>	1 attack 2 charm _____ gold and silver 3 lack _____ pleasing quality 4 pen _____ not having 5 shadow _____ something 6. measure	<b>9</b>	1 original 2 private _____ first 3 royal _____ not public 4 slow _____ all added 5 sorry _____ together 6 total
<b>5</b>	1 cream 2 factory _____ part of milk 3 nail _____ a lot of money 4 pupil _____ person who is studying 5 sacrifice 6 wealth	<b>10</b>	1 brave 2 electric _____ commonly done 3 firm _____ wanting food 4 hungry _____ having no fear 5 local 6 usual

**Part 2**

<b>1</b>	1 belt 2 climate _____ idea 3 executive _____ inner surface of 4 notion _____ your hand 5 palm _____ strip of leather 6 victim _____ worn around the waist	<b>6</b>	1 betray 2 dispose _____ frighten 3 embrace _____ say publicly 4 injure _____ hurt seriously 5 proclaim 6 scare
<b>2</b>	1 acid 2 bishop _____ cold feeling 3 chill _____ farm animal 4 ox _____ organization or 5 ridge _____ framework 6 structure	<b>7</b>	1 encounter 2 illustrate _____ meet 3 inspire _____ beg for help 4 plead _____ close completely 5 seal 6 shift
<b>3</b>	1 bench 2 charity _____ long seat 3 jar _____ help to the poor 4 mate _____ part of a country 5 mirror 6 province	<b>8</b>	1 assist 2 bother _____ help 3 condemn _____ cut neatly 4 erect _____ spin around quickly 5 trim 6 whirl
<b>4</b>	1 boot 2 device _____ army officer 3 lieutenant _____ a kind of stone 4 marble _____ tube through 5 phrase _____ which blood flows 6 vein	<b>9</b>	1 annual 2 concealed _____ wild 3 definite _____ clear and certain 4 mental _____ happening once a 5 previous _____ year 6 savage
<b>5</b>	1 apartment 2 candle _____ a place to live 3 draft _____ chance of something 4 horror _____ happening 5 prospect _____ first rough form of 6 timber _____ something written	<b>10</b>	1 dim 2 junior _____ strange 3 magnificent _____ wonderful 4 maternal _____ not clearly lit 5 odd 6 weary



## Part 4

1	1 benefit 2 labour            _____ work 3 percent            _____ part of 100 4 principle            _____ general idea used 5 source                    to guide one's 6 survey                    actions		1 achieve 2 conceive            _____ change 3 grant                    _____ connect together 4 link                    _____ finish successfully 5 modify 6 offset
2	1 element 2 fund                    _____ money for a 3 layer                    special purpose 4 philosophy            _____ skilled way of 5 proportion            doing something 6 technique            _____ study of the meaning of life		1 convert 2 design                    _____ keep out 3 exclude                    _____ stay alive 4 facilitate                    _____ change from one thing into another 5 indicate 6 survive
3	1 consent 2 enforcement            _____ total 3 investigation            _____ agreement or 4 parameter                    permission 5 sum                    _____ trying to find 6 trend information        about something		1 anticipate 2 compile                    _____ control something skilfully 3 convince                    _____ expect something will happen 5 manipulate                    _____ produce books and newspapers 6 publish
4	1 decade 2 fee                    _____ 10 years 3 file                    _____ subject of a discussion 4 incidence                    _____ money paid for services 5 perspective 6 topic		1 equivalent 2 financial                    _____ most important 3 forthcoming                    _____ concerning sight concerning 4 primary                    _____ concerning money 5 random 6 visual
5	1 colleague 2 erosion                    _____ action against the law 3 format                    _____ wearing away gradually 4 inclination                    _____ shape or size of something 5 panel 6 violation		1 alternative 2 ambiguous                    _____ last or most important 3 empirical                    _____ something different that can be chosen 4 ethnic                    _____ concerning people from a certain nation 5 mutual 6 ultimate

## APPENDIX L

### Questionnaire– Study 2

#### Section 1: Personal Information

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Class: \_\_\_\_\_

1. Sex (please tick): Male  Female
2. What is your native language? \_\_\_\_\_
3. How long have you been studying English? (Before enrolling in the current course)
 

Less than a year     1 – 3 years     4 – 7 years

8 to 10 years     more than 10 years
4. Did you attend a course in **writing in English** before coming to this institution? Please tick.
 

YES     NO
5. How long have you been in New Zealand? Please tick.
 

3 months or less     4 to 6 months     7 to 12 months     More than a year
6. Do you use English at home or outside the classroom? Please tick.
 

Never     Rarely     Sometimes     All the time
7. How often do you write things (in English) like stories, diaries, poems or letters in your own time? Please tick.
 

Never     Rarely     Sometimes     All the time

## Section 2: The Writing Process

In this part, you will find statements about the different stages of writing in English

Please read each statement and circle the number indicating **how true of you the statement is**.

1. Never or almost never true of me (never)
2. Usually not true of me (less than half of the time)
3. Somewhat true of me (about half of the time)
4. Usually true of me (more than half of the time)
5. Always or almost always true of me

### EXAMPLE:

<i>I eat snacks while watching tv.</i> If you eat snacks all the time when watching tv, or almost always, circle 5.	never true	usually not true	somewhat true	usually true	always true
	1	2	3	4	5

### 2.1 PRE-WRITING STAGE – The stage before you start writing your essay

Please circle the appropriate number.

	never true or almost never true	usually not true	somewhat true	usually true	always or almost always true
1. Before I start writing an essay in English, I look at a model essay written by a more proficient writer.	1	2	3	4	5
2. Before I start writing an essay in English, I think about ideas in my native language (your mother tongue).	1	2	3	4	5
3. Before I start writing an essay in English I note down words and short notes related to the topic.	1	2	3	4	5
4. Before I start writing an essay in English I write an outline in my native language.	1	2	3	4	5
5. Before I start writing an essay in English I only plan what to write in the first paragraph.	1	2	3	4	5
6. Before I start writing in an essay in English I will plan what I want to write in each paragraph.	1	2	3	4	5

## 2.2 WRITING STAGE – The stage where you draft your essay.

Please circle the appropriate number.

	never true	usually not true	somewhat true	usually true	always true
1. When writing in English I start with the introduction.	1	2	3	4	5
2. When writing in English I reread what I have written to get ideas how to continue.	1	2	3	4	5
3. When writing in English I always go back to my outline to get ideas how to continue.	1	2	3	4	5
4. When writing in English I write bits of the text in my native language and then translate them into English.	1	2	3	4	5
5. When writing in English I always have problems with my grammar and vocabulary.	1	2	3	4	5
6. When writing in English, I have to stop after each sentence because I have no ideas/ points for my essay	1	2	3	4	5
7. When writing in English, I always have a problem with spelling.	1	2	3	4	5
8. When writing in English, I stop to reread what I have written to see if my points are well-connected.	1	2	3	4	5
9. When writing in English, I always stop/ pause because I cannot find the right word/ expression in English	1	2	3	4	5
10. If I don't know a word in English, I write in my native language first and then try to find an appropriate English word later.	1	2	3	4	5
11. If I don't know a word in English, I stop writing and look up the word in the dictionary.	1	2	3	4	5
12. When writing in English I use a bilingual dictionary.	1	2	3	4	5
13. When writing in English I use a monolingual dictionary.	1	2	3	4	5
14. When writing in English I constantly check my spelling and grammar.	1	2	3	4	5
15. When writing in English I think about my tutor's/ teacher's expectations.	1	2	3	4	5

**2.3 REVISING STAGE – The stage where you have finished drafting.  
Please circle the appropriate number.**

	never true	usually not true	somewhat true	usually true	always true
1. When revising I read my text aloud.	1	2	3	4	5
2. When revising I only read what I have written when I have finished the whole paper.	1	2	3	4	5
3. I hand in my paper without reading it.	1	2	3	4	5
4. When I revise my paper, I make changes in vocabulary (making changes in the words that I have used)	1	2	3	4	5
5. When I revise my paper I make changes in the sentence structure.	1	2	3	4	5
6. When I revise my paper, I move the paragraphs/ sections around.	1	2	3	4	5
7. When I revise my paper, I make changes in the content or ideas.	1	2	3	4	5
8. When revising I focus on one thing at a time (e.g., content, spelling, grammar)	1	2	3	4	5
9. When revising I like to show my text to somebody and ask for his/her opinion.	1	2	3	4	5
10. I check my mistakes after I get back the paper with feedback from the teacher, and try to learn from them.	1	2	3	4	5
11. When revising I focus more on spelling and grammar of my essay.	1	2	3	4	5
12. When revising I focus more on the overall organisation of my essay.	1	2	3	4	5
13. When revising I focus more on the points presented in my essay.	1	2	3	4	5
14. If I am not happy with my essay, I will start writing a new draft.	1	2	3	4	5





## Section 2: Attitude towards Writing in English

Directions: Below are statements about how you feel about writing in English and your writing behaviour in English. There are no right or wrong answers for these statements. Please indicate the degree to which each statement applies to you by choosing whether you (1) Strongly Disagree (2) Disagree (3) Not Sure (4) Agree and (5) Strongly agree. Please try to be honest as possible.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Not Sure	Agree	Strongly agree
1. I like having the chance to express my ideas in writing.	1	2	3	4	5
2. I think my lecturers like my writing (react positively to my essays).	1	2	3	4	5
3. Writing is a very unpleasant experience for me.	1	2	3	4	5
4. I am not good at writing in English.	1	2	3	4	5
5. I feel confident in my ability to express ideas when writing in English.	1	2	3	4	5
6. When I hand in an English essay, I know I am going to do poorly.	1	2	3	4	5
7. I do not think I write in English as well as my classmates.	1	2	3	4	5
8. At times, my first paragraph takes me over an hour or more to write.	1	2	3	4	5
9. Starting a paper is very hard for me.	1	2	3	4	5
10. At times I find it hard to express what I mean.	1	2	3	4	5

### Section 3: The Writing Process

In this part, you will find statements about the different stages of writing in English

Please read each statement and circle the number indicating **how true of you the statement is**.

1. Never or almost never true of me (never)
2. Usually not true of me (less than half of the time)
3. Somewhat true of me (about half of the time)
4. Usually true of me (more than half of the time)
5. Always or almost always true of me

#### EXAMPLE:

<i>I eat snacks while watching tv.</i> If you eat snacks all the time when watching tv, or almost always, circle 5.	never true 1	usually not true 2	somewhat true 3	usually true 4	almost always true 5
--	-----------------	-----------------------	--------------------	-------------------	-------------------------

### 3.1 PRE-WRITING STAGE – The stage before you start writing your essay

Please circle the appropriate number.

	never true or almost never true	usually not true	somewhat true	usually true	almost always true
1. Before I start writing an essay in English, I look at a model essay written by a more proficient writer.	1	2	3	4	5
2. Before I start writing an essay in English, I think about ideas in my native language (your mother tongue).	1	2	3	4	5
3. Before I start writing an essay in English I note down words and short notes related to the topic.	1	2	3	4	5
4. Before I start writing an essay in English I write an outline in my native language.	1	2	3	4	5
5. Before I start writing an essay in English I only plan what to write in the first paragraph.	1	2	3	4	5
6. Before I start writing in an essay in English I will plan what I want to write in each paragraph.	1	2	3	4	5

### 3.2 WRITING STAGE – The stage where you draft your essay.

Please circle the appropriate number.

	never true	usually not true	somewhat true	usually true	Almost always true
1. When writing in English I start with the introduction.	1	2	3	4	5
2. When writing in English I reread what I have written to get ideas how to continue.	1	2	3	4	5
3. When writing in English I always go back to my outline to get ideas how to continue.	1	2	3	4	5
4. When writing in English I write bits of the text in my native language and then translate them into English.	1	2	3	4	5
5. When writing in English I always have problems with my grammar and vocabulary.	1	2	3	4	5
6. When writing in English, I have to stop after each sentence because I have no ideas/ points for my essay	1	2	3	4	5
7. When writing in English, I always have a problem with spelling.	1	2	3	4	5
8. When writing in English, I stop to reread what I have written to see if my points are well-connected.	1	2	3	4	5
9. When writing in English, I always stop/ pause because I cannot find the right word/ expression in English	1	2	3	4	5
10. If I don't know a word in English, I write in my native language first and then try to find an appropriate English word later.	1	2	3	4	5
11. If I don't know a word in English, I stop writing and look up the word in the dictionary.	1	2	3	4	5
12. When writing in English I use a bilingual dictionary.	1	2	3	4	5
13. When writing in English I use a monolingual dictionary.	1	2	3	4	5
14. When writing in English I constantly check my spelling and grammar.	1	2	3	4	5
15. When writing in English I think about my tutor's/ teacher's expectations.	1	2	3	4	5

### 3.3 REVISING STAGE – The stage where you have finished drafting.

Please circle the appropriate number.

	never true	usually not true	somewhat true	usually true	always true
1. When revising I read my text aloud.	1	2	3	4	5
2. When revising I only read what I have written when I have finished the whole paper.	1	2	3	4	5
3. I hand in my paper without reading it.	1	2	3	4	5
4. When I revise my paper, I make changes in vocabulary (making changes in the words that I have used)	1	2	3	4	5
5. When I revise my paper I make changes in the sentence structure.	1	2	3	4	5
6. When I revise my paper, I move the paragraphs/ sections around.	1	2	3	4	5
7. When I revise my paper, I make changes in the content or ideas.	1	2	3	4	5
8. When revising I focus on one thing at a time (e.g., content, spelling, grammar)	1	2	3	4	5
9. When revising I like to show my text to somebody and ask for his/her opinion.	1	2	3	4	5
10. I check my mistakes after I get back the paper with feedback from the teacher, and try to learn from them.	1	2	3	4	5
11. When revising I focus more on spelling and grammar of my essay.	1	2	3	4	5
12. When revising I focus more on the overall organisation of my essay.	1	2	3	4	5
13. When revising I focus more on the points presented in my essay.	1	2	3	4	5
14. If I am not happy with my essay, I will start writing a new draft.	1	2	3	4	5

## APPENDIX N

### Sample of error identification task

*Instruction: Please indicate whether each sentence is correct or whether it contains an error. Put a tick (√) in the box beside the sentence to indicate that it is correct and a cross(X) to indicate that the sentence is erroneous.*

1. I think I can show a good imej through my sport activities.  
(error: Borrowings)
2. I don't have enaf money to buy food at the café.  
(error: medium transfer)
3. I got exam results very good last semester.  
(error: literal translation)
4. We can do the assignment in the makmal computer.  
(error: language switch)

