Lexical Borrowings by Malaysian ESL Teachers

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Abstract

Language purists have viewed Malaysian English as divergence from native speakers' conventions due to lack of estimation of the language. Much need to be done before Malaysian English can be accurately described and codified. Hence, this qualitative study intends to show the range of usage of Standard Malaysian English lexis, that is the acrolectal variety, in the written and spoken discourse of 203 English as Second Language (ESL) teachers in 38 National Secondary Schools in the Klang district in Selangor. The main aims are to detect and categorise the types of lexical borrowings from three main languages in Malaysia namely Malay, Chinese and Indian languages used by the ESL teachers, to what extent these lexical borrowings are used and for what reasons. This study has identified and collected 483 lexical items over a period of one year that is, from December 2011 to November 2012, whereby qualitative data is interpreted quantitatively. The findings of this study show that the ESL teachers mainly use the lexical items from the Malay language more frequently as it is the official language and has a prestigious placing. Borrowings from the local languages show that the English language is still in contact with other languages to express new ideas and concepts and mostly to retain the culture and tradition of Malaysians regardless of ethnicity. It is prone to change according to the users' needs and to express themselves with respect to their needs to enhance and enrich the language and culture.

Keywords: standard Malaysian English, acrolectal variety, ESL teachers, lexical borrowings

1. Introduction

Like a microcosm of World Englishes, lexical borrowings in the English in Malaysia is used in a multitude of languages characterising different ethnic groups, socioeconomic, education, language and geographical backgrounds. It is also not unusual for Malaysians to code-switch according to context. Amidst the usage of local lexis arise issues about whether such lexis is correct or good or acceptable. The ones which are cultural specifiers which do not have proper and exact equivalents in the English language are the accepted ones. According to Low and Azirah (2012, p. 1), English is not merely used as a means of communication with foreigners from outside Southeast Asia (SEA) but, most importantly serves the role of lingua franca unifying the different ethnic groups living in the region (cited in Thirusanku & Melor, 2013, p. 18). Schneider (2011, p. 1) claims that "language use needs to be, and typically is, situationally appropriate".

The 'To Uphold Bahasa Malaysia and to Strengthen the English language' (MBMMBI) policy, introduced by the Education Ministry in the year 2012, aims to do so in line with the government's aspirations to make Bahasa Malaysia (BM) both a medium of unity and solidarity, as well as the main language of communication and science. At the same time, measures will also be taken to enhance proficiency in English (BI) so as to enable students to compete and explore new knowledge at national and international levels. The enculturation and mastery of English from school will also help in efforts to foster national unity and develop a new economy in a globalised, dynamic and increasingly challenging world (NST 23, September 2011, p. 14; cited in Thirusanku & Melor, 2012, p. 12). It is difficult to deny that both languages have an important role to play in producing human capital with the knowledge, skills and competency to drive a knowledge-based economy.

The intention of this qualitative study is to show the range of usage of Standard Malaysian English lexis, that is the acrolectal variety, in the written and spoken discourse of 203 English as Second Language (ESL) teachers in 38 National Secondary Schools in the Klang district in Selangor. The main aims are to detect and categorise the types of lexical borrowings from three main languages in Malaysia namely, Malay, Chinese and Indian languages used by ESL teachers, to what extent these lexical borrowings are used and for what reasons.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Definition of Borrowing

Borrowing is the process of speakers adopting words from a source language into their native language. According to Kemmer (2004), borrowing does not involve a direct lending process. This means transferring from a language to the other and transmitting phrases to the origin language do not occur. Borrowings are used by speakers of a community who speak a different language from the originated form. According to Gumperz (1982), borrowing is the introduction of single words or short frozen, idiomatic phrases from one variety into the other. The items in question are incorporated into the grammatical system of the borrowing language. They are treated as part of its lexicon, take on its morphological characteristics and enter into its syntactic structures. More succinctly, Kawangamalu (1989) defines borrowing as the integration of the borrowed item into the borrowing language System.

Lexical borrowing is most commonly defined as the influence on the linguistic patterns of a native language from another language with which it is in contact. Thomason and Kaufman (1988, p. 37), for instance, refer to borrowing as "the incorporation of foreign features into a group's native language by speakers of that language: the native language is maintained but is changed by the addition of the incorporated features". Similarly, Winford (2003, p. 11) uses the term lexical borrowing to describe the contact-induced changes that occur in situations whereby the speech community preserves the use of "its native language from generation to generation" but borrows some lexical and structural features from an external language.

According to Haugen (1950) and Ringbom (1913), borrowing involves the process where features are taken from a language and applied in another situation. Borrowing is defined by Haugen (1950, p. 163) as the intention to replicate the speech elements mastered from another. This is not mechanical but the replication process varies extensively from the original form, added by Bloomfield in Haugen (1950, p. 163). On the other hand, speech involves borrowing mechanically but an intentional process in writing as it involves planning of thoughts Ringbom (1913).

Kemmer (2004) claims that in the long run more speakers become familiar with new foreign words. Even speakers with little or no knowledge of the source language will be able to comprehend and use them. Therefore, the new words become conventionalised and are called borrowings or loanwords. He also claims that only some are converted to loanwords not all. The new words have to be used widely to reach the loanword stage.

According to Kemmer (2004), conventionalisation is a slow process where a word spreads to a larger speech community. More people become more familiar with this word and slowly the sound and related features are adopted. Gradually, this word is not seen as a loanword at all by the borrowing community. Kemmer (2004) claims that the longer a borrowed word has been in the language, and the more frequently it is used, the more it resembles the native words of the language.

2.2 Why Choose ESL Teachers as the Sample

The population in this study consists of 486 English as Second Language (ESL) teachers from 38 National Secondary Schools in the Klang district, in Selangor which is considered urban and semi-urban. According to the Klang District Education officer, Encik Mohd. Hanapi bin Mohd. Daud, there are 486 ESL teachers in the 38 National Secondary Schools in the Klang district, in Selangor. The total population for this study is 486 ESL teachers of Malay, Chinese and Indian origin but only 203 ESL teachers contributed the lexical items.

The choice of the ESL teachers as the sample by the researcher is to show that the ESL teachers are proficient in the English language but still use Malaysian English (ME). ESL teachers help students who do not primarily speak English develop English speaking and writing skills. Along with learning English, many ESL teachers help students understand various aspects of the Malaysian culture. In order for the teaching and learning to take place effectively the use of ME is necessary for a better understanding of the language and the social cultural differences which exist in our society. Since our students have various educational backgrounds, cultures and languages, the ESL teachers are important role models in transmitting information to the students. ESL teachers are encouraged to use language which will be of interest to the learners. Therefore, the ESL teachers are required to attend to their learners with some knowledge of their culture.

The policies and guidelines in the education system provide a basis for consistency, quality and equity while allowing for flexibility in the delivery of ESL lessons. To promote equity of ESL lessons, there is a need for consistent provincial policy and guidelines to set parameters, within which the ESL services are provided, establish provincially consistent language and recognise the need for flexibility of delivery. Malaysia is a diverse society; people from all walks of life contribute to the social, cultural and linguistic fabric of our province. This

diversity is mirrored in our schools' population, both in the contributions made and in the unique needs that must be addressed. The primary goal of the school system is to support the intellectual development of students. Enabling student to achieve the goals of human and social development and career development is a responsibility shared by schools, families and the community. These goals apply equally to all students, including English as Second Language learners (Policy & Guidelines, 2009).

The ESL teachers enable students whose primary language or languages of the home, are other than English to develop their individual potential within the school system. Some students who speak variations of English that differ significantly from the English used in the broader society may need similar services to access the curriculum. The purpose of ESL teachers is to assist students to become proficient in English, to develop both intellectually and as citizens, and to achieve the expected learning outcomes of the curriculum that value diversity, bridge cultures and work to eliminate racism (Policy & Guidelines, 2009). Respect for and valuing an individual's first language(s) and culture is important in order for English language learners to succeed. Educational, social, emotional and economic benefits can occur when students maintain their first language(s) or dialect(s). Students benefit from seeing their own history, literature and culture reflected in their school experiences.

ESL teachers should enable students achieve the expected learning outcomes of the curriculum, develop their individual potential and acquire the language proficiency, skills and attitudes needed to contribute positively to society. The ultimate goals of ESL teachers are social and academic communicative competence, the ability to use the language appropriate for the situation. The assessment of such competence is an area of specialised expertise and should be made by educational professionals with ESL training, in conjunction with classroom teachers and others as appropriate. Thus, the ESL teachers should reflect current research with regard to effective practices.

3. Methodology

The intention of this study is to explore the usage of Malaysian English lexis by 486 ESL teachers in 38 National Secondary Schools in the Klang district, in Selangor which is considered urban and semi-urban. The actual contributions of the lexical items were from 203 ESL teachers only. It intends to show the different kinds of lexical items from the three main languages in Malaysia used by these ESL teachers, the range of usage and the reasons. This study focused only on the lexical aspect of the Standard Malaysian English that is, the acrolectal variety used by these ESL teachers. The variation in the lexical aspect is acceptable especially for words not substitutable in an international context to give a more localised context and has international intelligibility (Baskaran, 1987). As such, only collection of words from the Malay, Chinese and Indian languages took place. In order to ascertain that the lexical items are definitely the acceptable acrolect or Standard Malaysian English lexis the corpus of data was checked with the use of three dictionaries namely, Times-Chambers Essential English Dictionary (1997) Second Edition, Macquarie Junior Dictionary (1999) and Grolier International Dictionary (2000). Whenever any lexical item was found in these dictionaries, it was then confirmed with the findings of earlier researchers of Malaysian English.

This study was based on written and spoken data by these ESL teachers and it identified and collected lexical items over a period of one year, which was from December 2011 to November 2012. Baskaran's (1985, 1987) framework - Cultural loading, Institutional concepts, Compounding, Connotative borrowings, Culinary loading, Lexical items functioning as a metaphor, Apostrophe showing possession, Suffixation, Pluralisation, Polysemic variation, Conversion and three other frameworks namely, Lowenberg (1986) - Lexical shift; Anthonysamy (1997) - Transfer and Ooi (2001) -Hybrids of non-English origin used in formal and informal situations were used to analyse the data in categories. Generally, this intensive plus comprehensive study of 14 categories chosen from the frameworks and 1 category which the researcher encountered during the research covered a wide aspect of lexical variations of Malaysian English collected from 203 out of the 486 ESL teachers over a period of one year. All the lexical items were collected, classified into the 15 categories and analysed based on the extent of use. Thus, qualitative data was interpreted quantitatively.

4. Research Question and Findings

This study has three research questions:

4.1 Research Question One

What types of lexical borrowings from the three main languages in Malaysia which are the Malay, Chinese and Indian languages used by ESL teachers?

The lexical items were categorised under two main groups of Baskaran's framework (1985, 1987) namely

Standard English Lexicalisation which refers to English lexis with ME usage and Substrate Language Referent which refers to usage of localised lexis in ME. The categories in which the data was categorised under the Substrate Language Referent group are, culinary loading, cultural loading compounding, institutional concepts, pluralisation, connotative borrowings, apostrophe showing possession, suffixation, conversion and lexical items functioning as a metaphor. Only one category was found under the Standard English Lexicalisation group which is polysemic variation. Other categories in this study were lexical shift from Lowenberg's (1986), transfer from Anthonysamy's (1997) and hybrids of non-English origin used in formal and informal situations from Ooi (2001). A new category prefixation was found in this study. This is a new contribution to this study in this field.

The prefixation category is a new category which the researcher encountered in the midst of the research. This is an additional category which was not mentioned in the frameworks under the 14 categories by previous researchers. The data collected revealed 3 lexical items showing prefixation which is *non-halal*, *non-Bumiputera* and *ex-qariah*. The choice of language used is Malay. In grammar, a prefix is a letter or group of letters added to the beginning of a word to make a new word (Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, 1998). The prefix 'non-' is a combining form used to add the meaning 'not' or 'the opposite of' to adjectives and nouns and the prefix 'ex-' is a combining form used to show that someone is no longer what they were, former or earlier. These examples show that the speaker knows the grammar rules in the usage of prefixation.

Under the Substrate Language Referent group, the concentration of words was under the category of cultural loadings with a total of 41.20%. Under this category 6 minor-categories namely, traditional festivals and religious observances, traditional clothes, traditional musical instruments and dances, traditional games, the art of self-defence and exercises and religious terms were identified. Out of 199 lexical items found in this category, 76 lexical items fall under traditional festivals and religious observances, 34 lexical items fall under the sub-category of religious terms, 34 lexical items under traditional musical instruments and dances, 17 lexical items fall under the sub-category of traditional games, 17 lexical items fall under art of self-defence and exercises and 21 lexical items fall under the sub-category of traditional clothes. The data portrays that most of the lexical items under the cultural loading category fall under the sub-category of traditional festival and religious observances.

The culinary loading category follows the cultural loading category with (34.78%). Out of 483 lexical items cultural and culinary loading categories of lexical items account for 75.98% of the total number of lexical items. The third largest category of lexical items is compounding consisting of 6.42% of the 31 lexical items collected. The number of words in the remaining categories falls accordingly. Institutional concepts comprise 5.38% of the overall number of lexical items. Connotative borrowings constitute 4.14% of the total number of lexical items followed by pluralisation which constitute 3.11% of the total number of lexical items. The transfer category comprises of 1.24% of the overall number of lexical items collected. The new category prefixation which the researcher encountered in the midst of the research comprises of 3 lexical items which is 0.62% of the overall number of lexical items. The categories of lexical shift, polysemic variation and apostrophe showing possession consist of 0.62% each of the total umber of lexical items collected. The categories suffixation and hybrids of non-English origin used in formal and informal situations are 0.41% each of the overall number of lexical items. The categories conversion and lexical items functioning as a metaphor are 0.21% each of the overall lexical items collected.

It is quite evident that most of the ME lexis is in the Substrate Language Referent group. Therefore, the data depicts that most of the lexical items fall under cultural loading, culinary loading, compounding, institutional concepts, connotative borrowings and pluralisation.

4.2 Research Question Two

To what extent lexical borrowings from the three main languages in Malaysia namely, the Malay, Chinese and Indian languages are used by the ESL teachers?

Lexical items are extensively utilised by Malaysian ESL teachers. The analysis portrays the Malay as the preferred language. Based on the 483 lexical items collected, 56.94% were derived from Malay, 14.29% derived from Chinese, 25.67% derived from Indian languages and only 1.66% derived from the English language. This clearly portrays the Malay language is preferred for use of lexical items.

Out of the 15 categories of lexical items focused in this research 14 has Malay lexical items; cultural loading, culinary loading, compounding, institutional concepts, connotative borrowings, pluralisation, transfer, prefixation, lexical shift, apostrophe showing possession, hybrids of non-English origin used in formal and informal situations, suffixation, lexical items functioning as a metaphor and conversion. No Malay lexical items were found in the category of polysemic variation. This is because polysemic variation is categorised under the

Standard English Lexicalisation group which deals with English lexical items only.

In all 14 categories mentioned, the Malay language has the highest number of lexical items. The lexical items from the Chinese and Indian languages were only in seven categories respectively while the lexical items from the English language were found in three categories only. The Chinese lexical items were in cultural loading, culinary loading, compounding, connotative borrowings, pluralisation, hybrids of non-English origin used in formal and informal situations and suffixation. The lexical items from the Indian languages were in cultural loading, culinary loading, compounding, institutional concepts, connotative borrowings, pluralisation and apostrophe showing possession. Finally, compounding, transfer and polysemic variation has lexical items from the English language.

Cultural loading has the highest quantity of Malay lexical items that is, 125 lexical items followed by 54 Indian lexical items and 20 Chinese lexical items. In the culinary loading category, 75 Malay lexical items were utilised followed by 52 lexical items from the Indian languages and 34 lexical items from the Chinese dialects. Compounding has 16 Malay lexical items, 8 Indian lexical items and 7 Chinese lexical items. In the category of institutional concepts where 24 lexical items from the Malay language, 2 lexical items from the Indian languages and none from the Chinese. Connotative borrowings have 15 lexical items from Malay, 3 lexical items from Chinese and 2 lexical items from the Indian languages. In the pluralisation category, 7 Malay lexical items, 5 Indian lexical items and 3 Chinese lexical items were used. In the new category of prefixation, 3 Malay lexical items were used and none collected under the Chinese dialects and Indian languages.

The categories transfer, lexical shift, conversion and lexical items functioning as a metaphor have 1, 3, 1 and 1 Malay lexical items used respectively. There were none collected under the Chinese dialects and Indian languages. However, at least 2 Malay lexical items were found in the category apostrophe showing possession, 1 Malay lexical item each in the categories suffixation and hybrids of non-English origin used in formal and informal situations. There were only 1 Indian lexical item found in the category apostrophe showing possession and only 1 Chinese lexical item each in the categories suffixation and hybrids of non-English origin used in formal and informal situations. This research reveals how the Malay lexical items were repeatedly utilised by the ESL teachers.

4.3 Research Question Three

What are the reasons for ESL teachers to utilise the lexical borrowings?

Festivals are an important role in the lifestyles of all Malaysians who are fond of traditions and customs. The data in this study portrays that the ESL teachers use words and phrases associated to the customs and beliefs in Malaysia to depict the multi-ethnic community present. The data also reveals the extensive use of lexical items related to the Malay, Chinese and Indian customs and traditions by the ESL teachers during festivals. This shows that the three races treasure the importance of maintaining their cultures' customs and traditions. Lexical items are generally utilised when English words are not accurate enough or when translation looses the elements of culture. Thus, the ESL teachers wish to preserve the original words and phrases related to religious festivals to transmit, indulge and experience the spirit of such festivals in Malaysia (Thirusanku & Melor, 2012).

The reason for the most number of lexical items for the cultural and culinary loading categories is because there are no English equivalents for the names of food and traditional observances. These lexical items will lose their local elements if translated into English (Chalaya, 2008).

The lexical items of connotative borrowings can be replaced or translated using English words. They are not done so because the lexical items in the original form have an additional element which becomes the preferred choice. An example is the lexical item *pasar malam* which can be translated to 'night market' but the scenario at the *pasar malam* has elements which differ from a 'night market'. Thus, this phrase 'night market' will not transmit the exact implied meaning.

Based on the data, even though some lexical items may be replaced with English words, many a times it is not done. It is because ESL teachers prefer their written and spoken discourse to be clear, concise, simple and straight to the point so that everyone comprehends. The usage of lexical times in this aspect is due to convenience. Most importantly, it is because of the constraint of time in the written and spoken discourse of the ESL teachers. Therefore, the original form of usage of these lexical items is to transmit information precisely and rapidly.

Since institutional concepts are institutionalised they do not have any equivalents in English. The lexical item *bumiputera* refers to 'Sons of the Soil' or origin of the land. This lexical item *bumiputera* has an in-depth meaning. Lowenberg (1984, p. 76) claims the lexical item *bumiputera* is specifically utilised "to favour this

group in educational and social plans in order to elevate their socio-economic status to parity with other Malaysians". Thus, the phrase 'Sons of the Soil' or another equivalent becomes inappropriate.

Usage of lexical items is largely related to the aim of the matter in the discussion. If the matter in the discussion is about the values of Islam, then Islamic phrases are widely used (Chalaya, 2008). This portrays that the ESL teachers have purposely chosen to use the local variety in their speech and writings. They are not keen to speak and write like the natives. This is clearly seen in the extensive usage of ME lexical items in their written and spoken discourse. Thus, as Malaysian ESL teachers who speak and write with the Malaysian lifestyle, the usage of ME lexis is suitable to transmit the local flavour.

Thus, it is necessary to use the local lexical items to be explicit since the essence may not exists or even transmitted differently in the English language (Govendan, 2001). As mentioned, most of the ME lexis fall under the Substrate Language Referent group. This is due to the fact that there are no equivalents or the English words are not able to convey the cultural aspects that follow (Chalaya, 2008). Due to this, the ESL teachers use the ME lexis which are self-explanatory in the discussion itself via clues in the context.

The Malay language is preferred for the use of lexical items. The highest distribution of lexical items in the Malay language is because most of the citizens are of the Malay origin. Other than this, it is used as a main media for instruction in the Malaysian schools. This is because it is the national language. Therefore, everyone in Malaysia can speak and comprehend the Malay language. Another reason is because the Malay language is considered the official language and has a reputable status in Malaysia. This is the reason why the Malay lexical items are used extensively.

Besides that the Malay language has the highest level of influence among the Malaysians. The data shows that the ESL teachers in Malaysia use the Malay borrowings more compared to the borrowings from the Chinese and the Indians. This is because the Malay Language that is Bahasa Melayu is the official language in Malaysia and the Malaysians correlate better to it. The lexical items, o*pen house, muhibbah, Rukun Negara* and *1Malaysia* are ideas distinctive to the Malaysians and their culture which depicts unity and patriotism. By using the local variety the ESL teachers form a special bond with the local speakers and listeners when they can understand better.

According to Tan (2006), the contact between the English and Malay languages in Malaysia has an interesting historical background of more than 200 years. It all started in 1786 in Penang with the interactions between the British traders and the locals, and from the political relationships in the 19th century between the British colonial officers and the Malay rulers to the current communications among the English-speaking and Malay-speaking bilinguals. The contact has been strong and still continues. "The overriding influence of Malay" (Morais, 2001, p. 35) has been the emphasis of many reviews of ME. The presence of the features borrowed from the Malay, Chinese and Indian communities is due to linguistic acculturation, a process "by which English is equipped to function effectively in non-Western, multilingual speech communities" (Lowenberg, 1986, p. 72).

Tan (2009) claims that despite the linguistic acculturation, the regularity and stability of the linguistic processes are more important under the phenomena of borrowing. In other words, the techniques that ME users choose consciously or subconsciously with the intention of improving the communicative and expressive functions of ME. The systematicity of the processes involved is portrayed in the linguistic outcomes and as far as ME is concerned, there is a possibility for corpus-based lexicography.

To summarise this research question, mostly the use of lexical items are due to the need to refer to local things and culturally related elements where there are no English equivalents. Mostly the lexical items under the 15 categories particularly, under the cultural and culinary categories do not have terms in English. These terms are used as such to retain the cultures and traditions by Malaysians despite their ethnic background.

Local delicacies and native food for example, *serunding, rendang, yee sang, bak kut teh, thosai* and *dhal* are common dishes in the local setting; art of self-defence and exercises and traditional games for example, *silat, congkak, tai chi, mahjong, kabadi* and *silambam* are still favoured by the multi-racial society despite the prevalence of western games and sports; traditional clothes for example, *baju Melayu, baju kurung, cheongsam, samfoo, saree* and *veshti* are in existence with gowns, skirts, blouses, shirts and slacks; and religious terms and observances for example, *haj, umrah, feng shui, Qing Ming, kavadi* and *pal kudam* are still practised by the society.

The ongoing relevance of the native things and cultural aspects shows that there is a requirement to use them in daily communication. ME speakers use the original word when they want to express it naturally because everyone comprehends it. In addition, as Weinreich (1953, p. 57) states, "lexical borrowing of this type can be

described as a result of the fact that using ready-made designations is more economical than describing things afresh. Few users of language are poets".

Occasionally, ME speakers use local words to show subtle differences of meaning. For example, lexical items like *gasing* and *wau* are used instead of top and kite to distinguish the giant top that weighs approximately five kg from the smaller top which is a tiny cone-like object which tapers to a steel point on which it spins and to distinguish the large local kite, normally flown by adults after harvesting rice, from the small kite which refers to a bamboo frame covered with paper, cloth or plastic, made to fly using a sting respectively. Another example is when the lexical item *pelamin* is used instead of dais. A *pelamin* refers to not just any ordinary dais but a wedding dais specially created for the *bersanding* ceremony during a Malay wedding. Other examples are *kebaya, baju kurung Kedah* and *shalwar kameez*, which refer to different trends of the conventional outfit worn by the Malays and Indians.

Certain lexical items transmit particular tenors which are tough to reproduce with the original English words. These lexical items are primarily used as borrowings for example, *bunga manggar* which is like an artificial flower tree is an important decorative part of traditional Malay and is used in public events such as wedding, opening ceremony and so on, *bunga telur* which consists of a hardboiled egg decorated with a fabric flower, as a sign of fertility, given to every guest at a Malay wedding, *rashi* which refers to the Indian horoscope or Zodiac sign and *feng shui* which is the art of decorating one's living area according to the Chinese culture and religion.

Some borrowings, under the areas of ministry, management and the kingdom, are inspired by patriotism for example, *Rukun Negara* which is the Malaysian declaration of national philosophy instituted by royal proclamation on Merdeka Day in 1970, *muhibbah* which means unity among multi-ethnic groups and *Malaysia Boleh*, literally means 'Malaysia Can' is a saying implemented to advertise the country's sense of achievement. The can-do spirit captured in this saying became popular as the *Malaysia Boleh* morale. This term became popular soon after the Malaysians managed to reach the summit of Mount Everest and followed by the commencement of the 16th Commonwealth Games. The inclusion of these phrases into ME emphasises the level of Bahasa Melayu and its function as the language of the Malaysian ministry and management which portrays the Malaysian spirit to stand united in order to succeed in its undertakings (Thirusanku, 1999).

Islamic terms are borrowed into ME either from Arabic via Malay or directly from Malay. This implies that the speaker is related to the opinion of his Islamic identification. Islam, the official religion is declared by the Malays, the largest ethnic community in Malaysia. The importance of Islam to the Muslim community, particularly the bilinguals in English, has created the demand to use Islamic terms into ME. These borrowed terms are used due to the absence of specific English terms describing their functions, customs and beliefs which are very important to them. *Alhamdulillah, Insyaallah* and *Allah* are specific Islamic terms used by the Muslims when communicating in English to stress their religious identity. This is an important issue in the socio-political domains of Malaysia, where there are pro-Malay economic policies and there is a link between Islam and the rulers (Tan, 2009).

Therefore, lexical borrowing in ME is not merely reproducing lexical items into the English language speech or writings from the Malay, Chinese or Indian languages. It is due to particular social and language demands of the multi-ethnic groups that speak English to convey elements of their sociocultural background. As these demands are regular and continuing, they bring about expected changes in ME, some of these have been reviewed in this study.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

Some general observations in this study are firstly, all ESL teachers regardless of ethnic group use the nativised lexical items. It is not possible to say that these nativised lexical items are used by certain ethnic group or groups. Many of these lexical items are used quite freely by ESL teachers from different ethnic groups. Of course there are a few lexical items which are used by one ethnic group and not by others but generally most of the lexical items used are for all to understand. This usage by the ESL teachers show there is 'solidarity' and 'unity' in understanding and using these nativised lexical items among Malaysians. These lexical items have become a common property of all Malaysians. For example, Chinese oriented lexical items like *ang pow, tai chi* and *feng shui* are used by other races in their everyday English as if these lexical items are a part and parcel of their lives. This shows the acceptance of the usage of ME lexis by the ESL teachers.

Secondly, the influence of other languages spoken in Malaysia. Lexical items from these local languages are borrowed into the nativised English in Malaysia. These lexical items are not just in the form of borrowed items but also other innovations which reflect influence of other languages. Lexical items like *Guruji's, Pengetua's* and *Tokoh Guru's* are a result of the influence of the Indian and Malay languages under the innovation of apostrophe

showing possession. Lexical items like *ex-qariah*, *non-Bumiputera* and *non-halal* are a result of the influence of the Malay language under the innovation of prefixation, a new category which the researcher encountered during the study. *Cheongsams, bumiputeras* and *chapatis* are lexical items as a result of the influence of the Chinese dialect, Malay and Indian languages under the innovation of pluralisation. Bahasa Melayu (the Malay language) has a major influence on the nativised lexical items of ME. It is understandable since Bahasa Melayu is the national language and used widely in Malaysia.

In fact, Nair-Venugopal (2000) points out that a particular evident trend of English in Malaysia today is the transfer of lexical features from Malay with the increased use and enshrined constitutional status of the national language. Out of the 15 categories 14 have lexical items with the Malay language influence, the only exceptional category is the polysemic variation category which involves English lexical items only. The influence from local languages especially Bahasa Melayu shows there is an adaptation of language use (Baskaran, 1987). The linguistic manipulation of the multilingual context in Malaysia has to be seen from the effectiveness within the context of use such as emotional effectiveness, stylistic effectiveness and effectiveness in terms of identity.

Even though the Malay language has the most extensive borrowings, there are some with non-Malay origins. These lexical items have distinct characteristics of Arabic morphemes. Some lexical items come from languages like Baba Malay, Javanese, Hindustani and Tamil. In this study, these lexical items have been treated as borrowings from the Malay language. This is due to the fact that the borrowings did not come directly into ME but instead into the Malay language first and then into ME. For example, Arabic terms such as *halal, haram*, *imam, kadi, syariah* and *umrah* entered the Malay language and were accepted before entering ME. The indirect way was not because Arabic was not in direct contact with English, but because these lexical items have a longer history in the Malay language (Tan, 2009).

Mostly, the Malay words used in ME implies morphemic importance, for example, simple lexical items like *bubur, madrasah* and *zina*; and compound lexical items like *ikan bilis, mat salleh, teh tarik* and *sepak takraw* are reproduced in ME in their original Malay spelling.

In addition to this, a particular Malay lexical item can be spelt in different ways, namely, *alhamdulillah* (Malay) / *Alhamdullilah / Alhamdullillah, bubur lambuk* (Malay), *bubur lambok, InsyaAllah / Insya-Allah / insya-Allah* (Malay) / *insyallah, keroncong* (Malay) / *kroncong, Ramadan* (Malay) / *Ramadhan* and *ulama* (Malay) / *ulamak.* Some lexical items of Arabic origin are difficult to represent in Roman letters, for example, *alhamdullillah, insya-Allah* and *Ramadan.* This is because of the spelling adoption that takes place when the origin language is not spelt with Roman Alphabets. Other cases are due to the changes over the years in the Malay orthography and also in the 1970s when *Sistem Ejaan Baru* (New Spelling System) was introduced, for example, *keroncong* and *bubur lambuk*. This does not occur in ME only but happens in the Malay language too. Thus, this cannot be considered as indications of nativisation (Tan, 2009).

Thirdly, more nativised lexical items are used when the topics or issues discussed are cultural or local based. The closer the topics are to 'home', the more nativised are the lexical items. Topics on festivals, religious observances, clothes, food and religious terms are related to local culture. In expressing views and opinions on these issues using English, lexical innovations are needed. When relating to local issues and concepts, nativised lexical items are also used. Many of these expressions and words (nativised lexical items) are used to express experiences dealing with these issues and concepts. Innovations which use the existing lexical stock in the mother tongue are good examples of this situation. Lexical items like *gotong-royong, bomoh, bumiputera* and *Rukun Negara* are some of the examples. Even coinages of English lexical items like *mat salleh, kiasu* and *kiasuism* are created as means of local cultural expression. Many of these lexical items are 'un-English'. These words and expressions have to be seen as adaptation to suit techniques of communicating particularly in non-Western, multilingual and socio-cultural settings (Lowenberg, 1986).

Another observation of the process of borrowing in ME is the semantic modification that accompanies the incorporation of certain lexical items into this variety of English. In other words, a lexical item brought into ME does not maintain all the native meanings, normally only one meaning is transmitted and this occasionally depicts the cultural element which does not exist in the native meanings. For example, the lexical item *rotan* has four main senses in Malay and three of these appear in ME. It refers to "any of various climbing plants of tropical Asia, having long, tough, slender stems", "a cane" and "judicially-sanctioned caning". The main meaning of *rotan* in ME, is "a rattan cane used for inflicting judicially-sanctioned corporal punishment in Malaysia". This meaning of *rotan* in ME has a cultural element. It refers only to a particular cane used to punish or cane the victims sentenced by the court and this meaning does not exist in the meanings of *rotan* in Malay. This is clearly seen in the phrase "stroke(s) of the rotan", the nativised version is used instead of "stroke(s) of the

cane" (Tan, 2009, p. 22).

Similarly, the lexical item *rakyat* carries two meanings, "the citizens of a state or country" and "the commoners (as opposed to the government or the aristocracy)" but neither of these meanings is restricted to the situation in Malaysia, thus, Malay phrases like *rakyat Amerika* "American citizens" or *rakyat asing* "foreign citizens" are as agreeable as *rakyat Malaysia* "Malaysian citizens". In the ME contexts, *rakyat* refers to the Malaysians either based on their citizenship or their residential place or to differentiate them from the ministry or the rulers (Tan, 2009).

The continuous contact between languages shows the paths the phrases went through in the borrowing process. This can be seen in the lexical item *briyani* rice. The Hindustani term, *biryani* refers to "a spicy meat and rice dish." When this term was accepted into the Malay language, new forms developed namely, *beriyani, nasi beriyani, briyani* and frequently, *nasi briyani. Briyani* was changed from *biryani* and the Malay word *nasi* "rice" was added because most of the Malay rice dishes begin with *nasi*, for example, *nasi dagang* "rice steamed in coconut milk with fish curry and extra ingredients such as fried, shaved coconut, hardboiled egg and vegetable pickles," *"nasi lemak* "rice cooked in coconut milk," "*nasi kerabu*" "bluish coloured rice served with dried fish or fried chicken and local salad," and so forth. Since the word *biryani* carries the meaning of "rice" in it, the word *nasi* in *nasi biryani* is actually redundant. Nevertheless, *biryani* was accepted into the Malay language first and then accepted into ME. So, in ME, *nasi briyani* and *briyani* rice are interchangeable. Although, the main origin of *briyani* rice is from the Hindustani term *biryani*, *nasi briyani* is considered a borrowing from the Malay language in this study because it had been indigenized based on this language and it is this form that was imported into ME (Tan, 2009).

This feature in ME (localised lexical items) will be more evident as Malaysia (and Malaysians) progress economically and socially. The internal systems will encourage fertile ground for innovations of new lexical items using English language with Malaysian flavour. For example, Malaysia is improving its education system to reflect a progression Malaysia. New lexical items will be coined to give it a Malaysianised image. It will be the same with other institutions like the banks and the courts especially when there is Islamic influence. Since these systems are based on local cultures and values, nativised lexical items will be used even if there are English equivalents. They are for internal use and people relate better to them.

One other important factor for the survival of ME is the intelligibility among Malaysians. This can be observed from the data. Usage of nativised lexical items is understood and communication is unaffected. This can be seen from the response of the speakers. These lexical items are clearly used to create an impact on the listeners. This (intelligibility) also shows that there is social acceptance and the messages are intact when these lexical items are used. One can see that the users do not try to speak like the natives.

As Kachru (1983, p. 41) says, the English using community must be seen in a new framework, in which a linguistic activity is under analysis within a specific socio-cultural context. Within the framework of user and uses, one has to take into consideration a cline of participants, cline of roles and cline of intelligibility. It is not possible for Malaysians to speak 'bookish' English or the classroom English, since social acceptance is important. The repertoire of the Malaysians has been influenced by their local languages. These verbal repertoires consist of several codes and the use of each code has a social meaning only understood by Malaysians.

This study focused only on the lexical aspect of the Standard Malaysian English which is, the acrolectal variety used by the ESL teachers. The variation in the lexical aspect is acceptable especially for words not substitutable in an international context to give a more localised context and has international intelligibility (Baskaran, 1987). The more formal acrolect is strongly linked to educational background. The audience and guests who are in the higher education bracket speak in this lect. Many of the nativised lexical items used by these speakers are institutionalised. Lexical items like *Malaysia Boleh* and use of titles like *Datukship* are common. As mentioned earlier these are also lexical items used by the mass media. These lexical items represent a stable usage of ME.

These are some of the general observations made in this study. They may very well indicate creativity and motivation by the Malaysian ESL teachers in using these lexical innovations. To quote Kachru (1990, p. 11) these observations show the real world situation in the Outer Circle which involves interlocutors using English as an additional language. The interlocutors in such interactions expect a functional range of varieties and they certainly adopt the strategies of mixing and switching depending on the participants. Many linguists nowadays regard English as an Asian language in its own right (Schreier, Trudgill, Schneider & Williams, 2010, p. 11).

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