

**THE 16<sup>TH</sup> BIENNIAL CONFERENCE OF THE ASAA**

**UNIVERSITY OF WOLLONGONG**

**AUSTRALIA 25-29 JUNE 2006**

**Asia reconstructed: from critiques of development to postcolonial studies**

**The Evolution of Malaysian English: Influences from Within**

Hajar Abdul Rahim *Hajar Abdul Rahim*

Universiti Sains Malaysia

**Abstract**

Nativisation is the linguistic readjustment that a language experiences at the phonological, grammatical and lexical levels due to the influence of local languages and various socio-cultural factors. It is a prominent feature in languages that are used in multiethnic and multilingual communities. In varieties of New Englishes such as Malaysian English, nativisation is a pertinent stage of cultural and linguistic transformation. The use of local lexis in the English variety is especially prominent at this stage not just to fill in a linguistic gap or because there are no English equivalent to account for local cultural environments, but also because the nuances of a local form is much more forceful than the English form to convey experiences, ideas, meanings and also environment that are closely tied with the local cultural and social situations. The use of the local lexis in this case could be seen as a lexical style. Language users, especially efficient bilinguals, choose to use a local form instead of an English lexical form because of the different semantic and often the ideological impact of such a use. This assumption is the motivation behind the current investigation of the nature of linguistic readjustment in Malaysian English. In particular, it explores the trend in the use of local lexis in the standard variety of English in Malaysia to reveal new knowledge of semantic and discursive spaces that may or may not defy the conventions or norms of linguistic borrowing and the ideological implications of such use on the development of Malaysian English.

*ps*  
*28/7/06*

## **1. Introduction**

As a social fact, language ‘shapes the culture and thought of people’ (Joseph 2004: 47) and in turn ‘most language is contained within culture’ (Hudson 1980). In this cyclic process, we find that language is a product of culture, and as such, a reflection of the social reality of the users. In this regard, scholars suggest that much information about society or a community can be gleaned from lexis because the use of words is motivated by the linguistic needs of communication and often also the ideological effects of the use. This claim is made based on the suggestion that meaning, especially discourse meaning results from the selection of “relevant portion of mental models about events” that contain opinions that may have ideological basis (van Dijk 1998: 205). As opinions are codified in language, particularly the lexicon, ideologies could be analysed through lexis or the use of words. “Simply spelling out all implications of the words being used in a specific discourse and context often provides a vast array of ideological meaning” (van Dijk 1998: 205). Thus, the choice to use one lexical form in place of another reflects the different semantic and often the ideological impact of such a use.

In this regard, the study is interested to find out the ideological implications of the use of local lexis, particularly Malay words, in the English used by Malaysians. Linguistically, this use is considered borrowing and constitutes an integral process in the nativisation or localisation of new varieties of Englishes, such as Malaysian English, that have emerged globally. In the context of the present study the inseparable link between language construction and identity construction is an important concern in discussing the motivation behind the trend in the use of the local words in nativising or localising English in Malaysia.

## **2. Evolving Englishes**

New varieties of English known as New Englishes have emerged around the world due to the global spread of English and changes that happen to the language. These are localized varieties of English, known also as Global Englishes or World Englishes. They have become localized mainly “through the influence of the other languages of the regions where they are used ... also through being adapted to the life and culture of their speakers” (Jackson and Zé Amvela 2001: 30-31)

The varieties of English that have emerged worldwide have generally been categorized based on two sociolinguistic factors: the function and political role of English. Thus one familiar approach is the distinctions made between ENL (English as Native Language, ESL (English as a Second Language) and EFL (English as a Foreign Language). A second approach or model is often cited and quite popular, that is Braj Kachru's Three Circles (1992). This model basically describes the spread of English by distinguishing countries of an inner circle, an outer circle and an expanding circle. Inner circle countries are those where English is used as the native or first language, outer circle countries are those where English is the second language whilst the expanding circle countries are those where English is a foreign language. These distinctions have however been challenged by researchers partly because of globalization that has seen English pushing into new spaces and occupying positions of economic importance throughout the world, altering its function and roles in different countries and in different ways. It has been suggested for instance, that Singapore, an outer circle country is fast moving towards the inner circle as English in the country establishes itself as a standard variety. Thailand that used to be in the

expanding circle may be approaching the outer circle as English becomes more important in the country.

Englishes throughout the world are therefore evolving due to various socio-political, and economic reasons. Schneider (2003) proposes the Dynamic Model to account for the evolution phenomenon of the New Englishes. The model proposes that “there is a shared underlying process which drives the formation of New Englishes, accounts for many similarities between them, and appears to operate whenever a language is transplanted” (Schneider, 2003: 241). The evolution of new Englishes is considered a cyclic process involving five phases - foundation, exonormative stabilisation, nativisation, endormative stabilisation and differentiation. New Englishes such as Australian English and New Zealand English that have gone through all five phases are established standard varieties, whilst others, such as Malaysian English, are still evolving at different phases of the cycle.

### **3. Linguistic readjustments**

The linguistic readjustment that a language experiences when used by speakers of different linguistic backgrounds is a prominent feature in languages that are used in multiethnic and multilingual communities. These readjustments are akin to what is linguistically known as nativisation, a process that happens at the phonological, grammatical and lexical levels.

Nativisation is prevalent in the varieties of English known as New Englishes that have emerged around the world due to the global spread of English and changes that

happen to the language. These are localized varieties of English, known also as Global Englishes or World Englishes. They have become localized mainly “through the influence of the other languages of the regions where they are used ... also through being adapted to the life and culture of their speakers” (Jackson and Zé Amvela 2001: 30-31)

Scholars consider New Englishes as varieties of English in their own right just like the ‘older’<sup>1</sup> Englishes (ibid: 31). These varieties develop along the same lines and go through the same phases towards achieving the status of a standard variety. Nativisation is one of the phases that the varieties experience. At this stage, distinct characteristics that are different from Standard English begin to emerge in the new variety, including distinct local accent, adoption of loanwords, the forming of new compounds, the use of prepositions distinct from the Standard English, creation of local set phrases and so forth.

Malaysian English<sup>2</sup> is one variety that exhibits unique readjustments due to the diverse panorama of speech communities. Nativisation or localisation of English in Malaysia is especially evident in the Low (L) variety of the language, commonly used in informal speech situations. The use of local intonation, structures influenced by

---

<sup>1</sup> Older Englishes are essentially the established or source varieties, in particular British English and American English.

<sup>2</sup> There are a few things that we need to establish before looking at the issue of the nativisation and evolution of English in Malaysia.

- Firstly, in Malaysia, English is used in a multilingual contact variety.
- Secondly, the main reference for English in Malaysia is Standard British English.
- Thirdly, the use and importance of English in Malaysia has undergone many changes as the ever-changing social, economic and political conditions of the country.
- Fourthly, the adoption of the Malay language or Bahasa Malaysia as the national language in the 1960s placed English as the official second language

local structures and the prominent use of the Malay particle *-lah* are some of the more prevalent local features in this variety. In the standard or High (H) variety, generally used in formal language situations, localisation seems to be most evident at the lexical level.

Nativisation at the lexical level takes the form of lexical innovation, a process that involves creating new words from existing English words as well as borrowings from local languages used by the speech community. Whilst both forms of lexical innovation exist in the standard variety of Malaysian English, studies suggest that the adoption of loanwords or borrowings from local lexis is the more prevalent form (Lim 2001; Morais 2001; Banafsheh 2005). Interestingly, Singapore English, coming from the same source as Malaysian English and used by groups of people of very similar linguistic backgrounds, does not display the same characteristic. That is, borrowings from local lexis are not as prevalent as in Malaysian English (Lim 2001; Banafsheh 2005). However, lexical innovation in the form of new words created from existing English words seems to be quite a unique feature in Singapore English. Research on standard Singapore English reveal the existence of compounds such as *executive flat*, *killer litter*, *exit permit*, *farecard*, *independent school*, *premier school* (Lim, 2001: 130). These localised forms have been produced to cater to the social and communicative needs of the society.

The distinction in the lexical innovation characteristics between Malaysian English and Singapore English is a simple yet highly pertinent one because it reflects not only the language choices made by speakers for the linguistic needs of the speech

community, but also the outcome of the socio-political realities that brought about such language behaviour. An integral element is the language policies of the two countries which are in sharp contrast yet in line with each one's nation building agenda. In Malaysia, Malay language, as the national language is the chosen language, the 'unifying element', so to speak, towards achieving one identity for the multiethnic, multilingual nation. As the official second language, English still maintains its importance as the language of commerce. In Singapore, the policy towards English-based bilingualism makes English the working language of the country (Kuo, Asmah, 1996; Schneider, 2003; Foley, 2001). English is so important that it is generally accepted as the language for the development and expression of national identity (Ho and Alsagoff, 1998).

Clearly, the language policies of each country inevitably has brought about and allowed the space for one form of lexical innovation and not the other for reasons that are beyond communicative and linguistic. As Schneider puts it, nativisation is "the central phase of both cultural and linguistic transformation" (2003: 247) because at this stage, besides functioning as a medium of communication, New Englishes are used as an expression of a new identity. In this regard, the prevalence of local lexis, in particular Malay forms, in the English used in Malaysia, and the preference for producing new forms of localised English compounds in Singapore are important current linguistic, cultural as well as identity indicators of the users.

#### **4. Borrowing**

The literature shows that the use of local lexis in varieties of New Englishes is not without rhyme or reason. Often lexical forms are borrowed to account for the local

“cultural and natural environments” (Gramley, 2001:136) because there is a lack of a denotative equivalent in English. In this case, the adoption is due to a linguistic gap. In this regard there is space, a linguistic one that needs to be filled so that meaning is constructed and communication is made possible. So this usually involves cases of words that refer to certain local concept, idea or culture that is absent in the English language and as such lacks a lexical representative. Yet this is not always the reason for local words to be used in a variety of New Englishes. We find that sometimes, even when there is an English form that could convey a meaning suitably, the local equivalent is used instead. This form of borrowing, when it occurs, is often a one-off occurrence. Although it is unlike conventional borrowing, it is not unknown in the literature. In fact, Poplack uses the term or ‘nonce-borrowing’ ‘momentary borrowing’ to refer to this phenomenon (1998: 58). Although this is the case, some researchers do not regard this form of language use as borrowing, rather an innovation on the part of the language user, something more akin to codeswitching.

As a linguistic process, codeswitching is a necessary linguistic process in multilingual and bilingual communities, especially in oral communication. Yet it is not uncommon in the written form. The motivations for codeswitching in the written form overlap those for oral communication<sup>3</sup>, but as McClure (1998) in her study of the form and function of national language-English codeswitching found, there are differences. In New Englishes, research on the standard varieties (Tay 1989, Wong 1994, Hajar and Harshita 2003), especially the written form, suggests the inclination

---

<sup>3</sup> Wardhaugh (1986: 102), in addressing the question of why people codeswitch, proposes a number of answers including ‘solidarity with listeners, choice of topic, and perceived social and cultural distance’. People may codeswitch to create a certain effect in a conversation, to establish rapport, to compensate for linguistic deficiency and also to fill a linguistic/conceptual gap (Crystal, 1987, Gysels, 1992).

among writers, usually effective bilinguals, to sometimes use this form of borrowing. A study on codeswitching in the English texts written by Malaysians suggests that the use of native lexical items by effective bilinguals, is 'typically intentional and the written codeswitching is a meaning-construction strategy' (Hajar and Harshita 2003: 173). The inclination to use native words even when there are English equivalents, the study reveal is motivated by the effect of the meaning, in particular connotative meaning, of the words on the interpretation of the message of the texts in which they occur.

Clearly, the use of native lexis provides language users the space for meaning that is not available in the English form. Connotations that the native forms carry are overtones of words that are beyond the denotations. They contain vital information that, as Platt et al. suggest, "convey atmosphere, shades of meaning and experiences which are tightly bound up with local background culture" (1984:89). Often the local forms are much more forceful than the English form. We could say that the effective bilingual chooses to switch to local forms because, to borrow Halliday's term, they are "value-charged" (1978: 66) in the social system of the user. The familiarity of form, and a desire to include additional information that is locally and culturally bound are motivations for the substitution.

Whilst acknowledging the important linguistic and communicative reasons for the use of local forms, it should be noted however that the choice of using a particular lexical form over another goes beyond linguistic needs. Beyond the linguistic transformation, as stated earlier, nativisation is an expression of identity. In this

regard, lexis or words especially are most forceful representatives because as Jackson and Zé Amvela point out, “vocabulary is the area in which these New Englishes best assert themselves” (2001:31). Given this and that nativisation is the phase for identity expression, the inclination to use local lexis, especially in place of an English equivalent may be seen as a phenomenon that is due to reasons that are beyond linguistic ones. Thus ideological reasons for the preference for local lexis in place of English forms cannot be discounted and indeed should be explored.

### **5. Identity construction in the linguistic space**

Identity, as has often been stated, is a rather difficult notion to pin down. Indeed, as Joseph (2004) argues, the term itself is not universally agreed upon in the literature. Nevertheless, there are certain ‘features of the contemporary treatment of identity’ (Joseph, 2004: 6) that are generally accepted by those in the area, one of which is the assumption that identities are constructed. The idea that identities are constructed presupposes that they can be deconstructed, reconstructed and co-constructed, and as such involves a process that is constantly changing, dependent upon various socio-economic and political elements (van Dijk 1998, Wong 2001, Joseph 2004).

An inherent element to the process of identity construction is language. Joseph argues that “identity is at root a matter of language” and emphasises the integral importance of the “language-identity nexus” (2004: 12). In discussing essentialism and constructionism, two opposing approaches to language and identity, Joseph considers “*language* itself as something that the individual constructs ... a text, a story about talking that is at the same time a story about ourselves, indeed that *creates* our selves” (2004: 89). Hence the inseparable link between language and identity.

Anderson (1991), in his well-known publication *Imagined Communities*, focuses on how national languages shape national identities. His theory however has been criticised by others who consider his constructionist approach to nationalism ‘a false simplicity’ as it treated national languages as if they were stable or constant instead of variables or constructs (Hobsbawm 1990, Silverstein 2000 cited in Joseph 2004:124). Indeed it has been suggested that Anderson neglected to consider that national identities also shape national languages because the two, national language and identity ‘arise in tandem ... in a complex process’ (Joseph 2004: 124). As interesting and important as it may be, the connection between national languages and national identities is not the main interest of the present study. However, the idea that language and identity construction is two-way street is an essential point in exploring the notion of identity in the linguistic space, in particular with regard to the focus of the paper which is borrowing, i.e. the use of Malay lexis, in Malaysian English.

The literature suggests that the nature of identities are arbitrary, not real in that sense, but once established, they are cognitively embedded as mental representations (Joseph 2004, Bourdieu 1991). The idea of identities being mental representations is the socio-cognitive treatment of identity that suggests that people construct themselves in representing the self and the self-representation is constructed gradually overtime from their own experiences. These experiences or what van Dijk (1998: 205) calls ‘models of events’ are cognitively stored and are laden with opinions that may have ideological basis. van Dijk’s theory makes a case for lexis as a tool to study identity because opinions are codified in the lexicon. He argues that “*variation* of lexical items (that is, lexical *style*) is a major means of ideological expression in discourse” (1998: 205). The choice to use one lexical form over another, van Dijk famously

suggests indicates not just the semantic but also as well the ideological effects of such a selection. Because of this, language users, he suggests, know their own style and as such may 'also partly control it, and thereby either emphasize or precisely conceal their 'real' ideological opinions" (ibid).

Van Dijk's argument perhaps holds true especially in some of the instances of local lexis use in the standard variety of New Englishes. This is because standard varieties include text and talk used in formal situations by effective bilinguals who know how to convey the message in either language. So when a local form is chosen it "is often intentional and can serve a variety of purposes" (Odlin, 1989: 146). Essentially, the user makes a deliberate linguistic choice to use a particular local form over the English form. The choice to use a particular form, motivated by the semantic and more importantly ideological effects of the use, undeniably impacts upon the message that a user intends to convey. It also represents a stand taken by a speaker of a language in using a language which is inextricably linked with the ideology behind its use.

Inevitably, this choice also alters or readjusts the physical linguistic spaces within a language or a language variety. More interestingly, the bundles of ideological and cultural information that are neatly bound up in the local forms are also identity indicators. In this sense, the linguistic space is altered to allow identity space and recognition through borrowing – perhaps even challenging the linguistic boundaries that conventional thought holds, ultimately, affecting the development or evolution of the language. This paper explores further the use of local lexis by looking at the

linguistic space that is occupied, the construction and negotiation of identities from this use and its implication on the development of Malaysian English.

## **6. The study**

Nativisation, in particular at the lexical level in Malaysian English, is the interest of this paper. Past research suggests that in Malaysian English, in particular the standard variety, nativisation at the lexical level is very much inclined towards the borrowing of local lexis, in particular from Malay (Morais, 2001; Lim 2001; Schneider, 2003; Hajar & Harshita, 2003; Banafsheh, 2005). The pattern of usage of Malay words, especially in the written form, suggests that the words are often used to fill the linguistic gap. Yet, the practice of resorting to local lexis even when there are English equivalents is not uncommon either.

### **6.1 Materials and methods**

The focus of the study is the use of local lexis in the standard variety of Malaysian English. This essentially means looking at text or talk used in formal situations or the (H) variety by effective bilinguals. For a systematic approach to this, a corpus-based method was adopted, to facilitate the quantitative requirement of the study and the qualitative analysis that is required in revealing the link between language choice and linguistic space.

A collection of written texts by Malaysian speakers, taken from the Malaysian component of the International Corpus of English (ICE)<sup>4</sup> formed the corpus for the

---

<sup>4</sup> ICE Malaysia is a project that is ongoing. The corpus currently has approximately 160K words of mainly written language from various text-types.

study. The corpus was approximately 120,000 words of standard Malaysian English texts from various newspaper categories (reports, editorials, non-academic humanities, technology and social science articles) from a mainstream daily the *New Straits Times*. The WordSmith Tools (1998) package was used to locate the Malay words in the corpus. A wordlist of hundreds of Malay words was initially generated from which 87 words were finally extracted and analysed.

## **6.2 Analysis**

Van Dijk (1998) in his treatment of identity, considers it ‘both a personal and social construct, that is, a mental representation’ (1998: 118). This socio-cognitive approach suggests that people construct themselves in representing the self. The self-representation ‘is a gradually constructed abstraction from personal experiences (models) of events’ (ibid), which is represented in accumulated mental models. These models are important in the production of meaning and language understanding because firstly, discourse meanings arise from the selection of knowledge or information from relevant mental models and secondly, they contain opinions which may be biased or ideological (van Dijk, 1998).

Many of these opinions in van Dijk’s view, are codified in the lexicon. It follows from this therefore that lexical analysis is one of the most effective techniques in analysing ideological discourse. In this regard, van Dijk claims that by “spelling out all implications of the words being used in a specific discourse and context often provides a vast array of ideological meaning” (1998: 205).

Looking at how a particular word is used in certain context can shed a spectrum of meanings, in particular those that are ideological. This is because discourse meanings are the due to the process of selecting relevant portions of mental models.

A cursory look at the 87 words, which are mainly nouns, some verbs and a few adjectives, suggest that they could be grouped according to certain social domains, namely culture, politics and religion. The breakdown of the words according to the different domains is presented below:

	Number	Percentage
Culture	40	46
Politics	9	10.34
Religion	17	19.54
Others	21	24.12
Total	87	100

One striking initial finding from the above data is the fairly large number of words belonging to the culture domain. This is not surprising as words referring to local culture and cultural matters are not be easily substituted by English forms. The words that fall within the culture domain include those referring to custom and festival, names of food/dishes, clothing, accessories, art, artefact and weapon.

The data presented above also show that 10% of the words generated from the corpus belong to the domain of politics. Interestingly, many of these words have English equivalents that could convey the message just as well. Malay words that fall in the domain of religion make up 20% of the total words analysed. Most of these words make reference to Islam. Many instances of these words therefore are Arabic forms that have been borrowed into Malay. As in the case of words in the domain of politics, there are some words in the domain of religion that have equivalents in English that

the writers could have used to convey the message. Words categorised as ‘others’ include those related to the environment, fauna, human behaviour and so forth. These make up one-fifth of the total words analysed.

## 7. Discussion

Although 87 words were analysed, for the purpose of this discussion, selected words from each domain will be used. The words for the discussion are those which have clear English equivalents. The other words which are not included in the discussion are essentially Malay forms that appear in the texts to fill a linguistic gap or because the English forms are not suitable in the context of use. The option to use these local forms over the English equivalents is a pertinent matter and one that is central to the issue of language choice and linguistic space in Malaysian English. All together 18 were selected and they are listed in the left column in the table below.

Domain	Borrowed Malay words	Possible English equivalent
Culture	<i>mahkota</i> <i>parang</i>	crown machete
Politics	<i>anjing kerajaan</i> (dog government) <i>bangsa</i> <i>merdeka</i> <i>penceramah</i> <i>penghulu</i> <i>rakyat</i>	government lap dog  race independence speaker village head citizens/ malaysians
Religion	<i>azan</i> <i>nabi</i>	call for prayer prophet
Others	<i>istana</i> <i>kampung</i> <i>pasar malam</i> (market night) <i>padi</i> <i>kerabat raja</i> <i>pertabalan</i> <i>canggih</i> <i>rotan</i>	palace village night market  rice royalty coronation sophisticated rattan

The English words listed in the right column are the denotative equivalents of the Malay forms. These words could be used to convey the message just as well as the Malays forms. However, in some cases such as *azan* in the religion domain, the choice to use the Malay form could be due to the fact that the act of calling for prayer is of particular reference to Islam. So the native form conveys the exact meaning of the word. Yet this cannot be said for the word *nabi* meaning ‘prophet’. Prophet is a universal term but the local form was used by the writer in an article on Islam. This is obviously a deliberate choice made by the writer because of the context of the discourse, not because of semantics.

The total number of borrowed words that fall in the domain of politics is only 9. Yet, as we can see in the above table, 6 of them have English equivalents. The words *bangsa*, *merdeka* and *rakyat* are especially interesting. These words encapsulate strong connotations of loyalty, subordination, inclusivity that locals understand. The ideological reason behind their use is undeniable.

The example *anjing kerajaan* has powerful cultural connotations and force in its context of use. This is basically because, *anjing* (dog), has in the Malay context, mostly negative connotations. Whilst ‘dog’ may carry positive connotations in certain context of use in English, the same cannot be said for the Malay equivalent. So to use the English equivalent would detract from the force of the meaning to be conveyed. Perhaps the same could be said for the choice to use *parang* (domain of culture) instead of ‘machete’. The connotations of terror and running amuck are very vivid in the local reference of the word. Although this is the case, had the writer chosen the English equivalent, the meaning would still have been conveyed as the word machete

can have similar connotations. This line of argument could be used for other examples such as *penceramah* which literally refers to a ‘speaker’, *istana* which basically means palace, *canggih* which essentially means ‘sophisticated’ and *pertabalan* which is ‘coronation’. These words unlike the words in the domain of politics are not loaded and do not carry particularly strong connotations or culturally-specific information. They are quite neutral in that sense. The same may be said for the words *padi*, *kampung* and *pasar malam*. In these cases, the local items were used possibly because of the familiarity of form. Yet, this does not discount the fact that the English equivalents, *rice*, *village* and *night market* are also familiar forms among Malaysians.

Other than the above, the case of the word *rotan* is especially curious. The word rattan in English was borrowed from the Malay language and could be considered neutral in terms of connotations. As such, it is rather curious that the Malay form is resorted to when the English equivalent would have delivered the same message.

### **7.1 Borrowing and linguistic space in Malaysian English**

The results of the study suggest that borrowing in Malaysian English is in many cases to fill a linguistic gap. There is also borrowing that is due to the forceful nuances of the local forms lacking in English words (e.g. *bangsa*, *merdeka*, *rakyat*). Yet, some are borrowed most likely because of familiarity of form or appeal to the local understanding (e.g. *padi*, *kampung*, *pasar malam*). There are others that are borrowed although the English forms would have conveyed the exact meaning (e.g. *penceramah*, *istana*, *canggih*). These local forms are neutral in their connotations. And finally we find a form of borrowing (*rotan*) that seems baffling and nonsensical.

These examples suggest that borrowing as a form of nativisation at the lexical level in standard Malaysian English is not always a necessity. In certain cases, it is clear that the language users, who are effective bilinguals deliberately choose to use the local form. This practice does not abide by conventional linguistic borrowing. One-off occurrence, although considered a form of borrowing, is more likely code-switching. And the insistence on using a local form which had been borrowed and adapted into English suggests that borrowing in Malaysian English is almost erratic and without limit. "Language use is culturally grounded" (Ooi 2001: 102) and language users, as part of a particular culture, "take the grounding of language use in culture for granted and therefore are normally unconscious about it" (ibid: 103)

The above suggests that the linguistic space allowed for local forms in Malaysian English is not restricted to conventional borrowing. There is a high level of flexibility in allowing the use of local forms. This phenomenon, in the era of globalisation, and English making a comeback locally, presents a tension that is quite interesting. The prevalence of borrowing and the pattern of borrowing is a reflection of the language users' behaviour. The use of local words especially when there are appropriate English forms is a strong indication of language users' response to the current global situation and their claim for an identity in the global space. English language users in Malaysia are comfortable in their own zone and the way they use the language is an expression of 'us' that they want to be defined. Therefore, whilst English strengthens its position as an international language, what is happening in New Englishes such as

Malaysian English, is a form of personalisation or a reconstruction of the language to suit the needs and wants of the local consumption.

## 8. Conclusion

The pattern of borrowing in Malaysian English suggests that the users of the language do not borrow from local lexis only when it is necessary. Researchers suggest that this heavy reliance on local forms is an indication of the fossilized state of English in Malaysia. Researchers warn of the danger that the variety would transgress and move towards the expanding circle, where English is a foreign language. Yet, this may not be the case if we consider the suggestion that that English does not belong to speakers where the language originated anymore. In fact it now belongs to many communities throughout the world and some might say that they have colonized the English language. This naturally involves imposing the local forms onto the variety.

## References

- Anderson, B. (1991). *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, 2nd edition. London and New York: Verso.
- Asmah Haji Omar (1987). *Malay in its Sociocultural Context*. Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa and Pustaka.
- Banafsheh Bakavoli (2005). *A Corpus-based Comparative Study of the Use of Native Lexical Items in the Malaysian and Singaporean English*. Unpublished MA thesis. School of Humanities, Universiti Sains Malaysia.
- Bourdieu, P. (1991). *Language and Symbolic Power: the Economy of Linguistic Exchanges*, ed. By John B. Thompson, translated by Gino Raymond and Matthew Adamson (Cambridge: Polity, in association with Basil Blackwell).
- Foley, J.A. (1998). *English in New Cultural Contexts: Reflections from Singapore*. Singapore: Oxford University Press.
- Gramley, S. (2001). *The vocabulary of World English*. London: Arnold.

- Hajar Abdul Rahim & Harshita Aini Haroon (2003). 'The use of native lexical items in English texts as a codeswitching strategy'. In Sylviane Granger and Stephanie Petch-Tyson (ed.). *Extending the scope of corpus-based research: New applications, new challenges*. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 159-175.
- Halliday, M.A.K.. (1978). *Language as Social Semiotic*. London: Edward Arnold.
- Hobsbawm, E. J. (1990). *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programmes, Myth, Reality*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Jackson, H. and Zé Amvela, E. (2000). *Words, Meaning and Vocabulary: An Introduction to Modern English Lexicology*. London: Cassell.
- Joseph, J.E. (2004). *Language and Identity: National, Ethnic, Religious*. Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Kachru, Braj B. (1978) *The Other Tongue: English Across Cultures*, 2nd ed. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.
- Lim, G. (2001). Till Divorce Do Us Part: The Case of Singaporean and Malaysian English. In Ooi, V.B.Y. (ed), *Evolving Identities: The English Language in Singapore and Malaysia*. Singapura: Times Academic Press.
- McClure, E. (1998). The Relationship between form and function in written national language – English codeswitching: Evidence from Mexico, Spain and Bulgaria. In R.Jacobson (ed.) *Codeswitching Worldwide*. New York: Mouton de Gruyter. 125-150.
- Morais, E. (2001). Lectoral Varieties of Malaysian English. In Ooi, V.B.Y. (ed), *Evolving Identities: The English Language in Singapore and Malaysia*. Singapura: Times Academic Press.
- Odlin, T. (1989). *Language Transfer*. – (The Cambridge Applied Linguistics Series). Cambridge University Press.
- Ooi, V.B.Y. (2001). *Evolving Identities: The English Language in Singapore and Malaysia*. Singapura: Times Academic Press
- Poplack, S. (1998), 'Contrasting Patterns of Codeswitch in Two Communities' in P. Trudgill and J. Cheshire (eds), *The Sociolinguistics Reader Volume I: Multilingualism and Variation*. London: Arnold. 44-65
- Schneider, E. W. (2003). The Dynamics of New Englishes: From Identity Construction to Dialect Birth. *Language*. Vol: 79:2. 233-281.
- Silverstein, M. (2000). Whorfianism and the Linguistic Imagination of Nationality. In Paul V. Kroskrity (ed.) *Regimes of Language: Ideologies, Politics and Identities* Santa Fe, NM: School of American Research Press, 19-43.
- Tay, M.W.J. (1989) Code switching and code mixing as a communicative strategy in multilingual discourse. *World Englishes*. 8(3): 407-417.
- Van Dijk, T. A. (1998). *Ideology: A Multidisciplinary Approach*. London: Sage Publications.
- Wong, R. (1994) 'Strategies for the Construction of Meaning: Chinese Students in Singapore Writing in English and Chinese'. Di In R. Khoo, U. Kreher, and Ruth Wong (Eds.) *Towards Global Multilingualism: European Models and Asian Realities*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters Ltd.
- Wong S. K. (2001). Revisiting Malay Feminism. Dalam Maznah Mohamad & Wong Soak Koon (ed.) *Risking Malaysia – Culture, Politics and Identity*. Bangi: Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia Press.