

CHAPTER 6

Conclusion

this statement, the analysis in Chapter 3 has shown that the meaning of lexical borrowings in prose writing is generally transparent even to the Inner Circle reader from the context of use. Consider again the use of the term *changkul*, in the first instance translated in a footnote as ‘Malaysian hoe’, in the second instance without translation. In the second instance, the term is easily interpreted as a digging tool:

He ran round to the back of the house where the *changkuls* were kept and grabbed one. The men forced the *changkul* out of his hand. (*The Return*, p161)

The boys spent their afternoons desultorily digging at an unyielding plot of ground. Mala, watching them, noticed how the handles of the *changkul* flew away from them. There was a dull thud as the *changkul* hit the ground. (*Mala*, in *Sensuous Horizons*, p222)

In drama, e.g. *The Cord*, the fact that items referred to with lexical borrowings are usually seen on stage, facilitates comprehension. In both prose writing and drama, Chapters 3, 4 and 5 have shown that Maniam does not use grammatical simplification alone as an indicator of ethnolect and sociolect, rather it is used in tandem with stylistic innovations. This blend of creativity reveals the underlying mentality of the society in question *without* generating significant difficulties in interpretation. Even *Ratnamuni*, which is written entirely in a local variant, is not impossible for the Inner Circle reader to interpret as Maniam only uses extensive grammatical simplification in the first pages for setting the scene; stylistic creativity is the primary creative strategy used thereafter to portray the thought processes of the Malaysian Indian protagonist.

It should be noted that many applied linguists believe that NNELs may have specific appeal to an Inner Circle audience. According to Smith, who

discusses the effectiveness of NNELs in increasing cross-cultural understanding:

... novels offer both explicit and implicit information about a culture (e.g. values, style of argumentation, structure of information, and forms of address) which is cleverly made a part of the story/plot ... this cultural information will create an interest and an understanding in the reader concerning the people of the country described.³

Nelson, too, advocates the reading of NNELs by monolinguals in order to 'expand their awareness and appreciation of other varieties of English'. He states that:

... (generally) the author works enough clues into the text to lead the reader to interpretation, if not complete comprehension. Thus the new-English author provokes readers to awareness of a larger world.⁴

6.2 *Linguistic Creativity: a Worldwide Phenomenon*

It has been observed that the use of 'other-language elements' in NNELs is *not* unlike the use of local dialects in Inner Circle literatures to portray 'lower class or comic characters'⁵. Platt and Weber provide the following example from the servant's speech in Emily Bronte's *Wuthering Heights*:

"Noa!" said Joseph ... "Noa! That means naught. Hathecliff maks noa 'count uh t' mother, nur ye norther, but he'll heve his lad; and I mun tak him – soa now ye knaw!"⁶

Interestingly, this is the revised – i.e. more 'standard' - version of Joseph's speech! What is implied here is that readers of any cultural background, monolingual or otherwise, should *expect* to have to work at interpreting a text.

Today numerous acclaimed Inner Circle authors of African or Asian ethnic origins write in English, but avail themselves of ethnolectal and sociolectal creativity to foreground the ethnicity of their characters and authenticate the cultural setting of their works. Among these writers are Doris Lessing⁷, Salman Rushdie⁸, and ,more recently, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni⁹. As in Maniam's works, lexical borrowings with embedding regularly occur in descriptions of the country in Lessing's first novel *The Grass is Singing*¹⁰, which is set in Rhodesia:

As the railway lines spread and knotted and ramified all over Southern Africa, along them, at short distances of a few miles, sprang up little *dorps* that to a traveller appear as insignificant clusters of ugly buildings, but which are the centres of farming districts perhaps a couple of hundred miles across. (p32) (Emphasis is mine)

With nothing to do, she would wander on to the verandah, to sit watching the lights change on the distant blue *kopjes*; or she would go to the back of the house where the little *kopje* stood, a rough heap of giant boulders ... (p70) (Emphasis is mine)

Features of grammatical simplification and nativized speech styles, similar to those which occur in the dialogue of Maniam's plantation workers and other less educated characters, are found in the speech of the Indian chauffeur in Banerjee's *The Mistress of Spices*¹¹:

'Listen, listen. Last night I'm sitting at McDonald's ... when someone puts his hand on my shoulder ... I'm praying to Allah as I turn but it is only being Mujibar from my uncle's village up near Pahalgaon ... He's done good too. Owns a couple of taxis already and is looking for driver. Good pay, he is telling me ... So I say yes and go and tell memsaab I am leaving. Lady I tell you, her face turned purple like a brinjal. So from tomorrow I am driving a cab black and yellow like sunflowers.' (p29)

For Maniam, like these and many other bilingual authors, 'it was not a conscious choice to write in English (but rather) a factor or outgrowth of the surrounding situation'¹². English education, particularly when received in colonial times, makes English the primary code for documenting reality, even when that reality is built on different beliefs and conventions. The English language, therefore, must be adapted to reflect the reality in question.

In conclusion, following textual analysis of Maniam's creative writing, and taking into consideration both the findings of existing research in the area of NNELs and the viewpoints expressed by the author himself, this study finds that Maniam, like other post-colonial writers, consciously or otherwise nativizes English, molding the language to his own creative purposes. Due largely to linguistic creativity, Maniam's works come across as 'ideologically satisfying for native aspirations'¹³, in that the language should appeal to the Malaysian (and not just Malaysian *Indian*) reader or audience who may empathize with his themes, as well as 'internationally accessible for a wide readership'¹⁴, affording the Inner Circle individual a glimpse at wider realities.

NOTES

¹ *Bilingual writing for the monolingual reader: blowing up the canon*, Cecil L. Nelson, *World Englishes*, Vol 11, No 2/3, 1992.

² K. S. Maniam, interviewed by Gianna Cesarano, 20 January 1999.

³ Larry E. Smith, *Cross-cultural understanding and English literatures from the Other Circles*, in *World Englishes*, Vol 5, No 2/3, 1986.

⁴ Cecil L. Nelson, *Bilingual Writing for the Monolingual Reader: Blowing up the Canon*, in *World Englishes*, Vol.11, No. 2/3, 1992.

⁵ Crewe, quoted by Platt and Weber in *English in Singapore and Malaysia – Status, Features and Functions*, Oxford University Press, 1980.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ British author, born in Rhodesia in 1991, resident in London, U.K. since 1949. The style of Lessing's narrative is 'standard' English; however features of localised English occur frequently in those works set in southern Africa.

⁸ Born in India in its year of Independence, 1947, Rushdie was educated in England and is resident there. His works are generally set in the Indian sub-continent. His 'stylistic experimentation' is commented on by Kachru in *The Alchemy of English* (see Bibliography).

⁹ Born in India, this author is now resident in San Francisco, U.S.A.

¹⁰ Panther Books edition, London, 1980.

¹¹ Black Swan edition, 1997.

¹² As note 2.

¹³ *Competing discourses in Sri Lankan English poetry*, A. Suresh Canagarajah, World Englishes, Vol 13, No 3, 1994.

¹⁴ Ibid.