

CHAPTER 3 - METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

Malaysia is a fast developing country with a vision to achieve developed country status by the year 2020. The government is coming up with plans and policies in order to upgrade the standard and quality of living of the people. The mass media has an important role in disseminating information and educating the public.

In line with the government's policy of working to create a literate and thinking society, newspapers are published not only in the official language (Bahasa Malaysia) but also in English, Chinese and Tamil.

3.1 Research Design

This study intends to describe the nativized lexical items used in a local daily, The New Straits Times, a Malaysian English Language newspaper. These lexical items will be categorized and exemplified. The research questions in this study are:

1. What are the causes of such lexico-semantic variation?
2. What are the sociolinguistic and pedagogical implications of such lexico-semantic variation in Malaysian English?

3.1.1 Data Collection

A total of 84 local news articles were collected over a period of two weeks (19 August 2001 to 1 September 2001) from The New Straits Times. The New Straits Times was chosen for this study because it is the oldest English language newspaper in the world as it was first published on 15 July 1845. It was originally known as The Straits Times, a name derived from The Straits of Malacca. Today, it is one of the leading English language newspapers in Malaysia with an average daily circulation of 160,000 copies (www.nst.com.my). The news items were randomly selected from the national news pages. Only news items from the National news section were selected because they are written by Malaysian journalists and they reflect the way English is used in Malaysia. The news items picked cover a wide range and represent the multilingual, multicultural, and multireligious population of the country.

3.1.2 Data Management and Analysis

The data is analyzed based on Efurosibina Adegbiya's (1989: 165–177) and Edmond O Bamiro's (1994: 47 – 60) work on lexico-semantic variation in Nigerian English. The data is classified according to eight categories to exemplify the existence of lexico-semantic variation in Malaysian English. Both these studies, Adegbiya (1989) and Bamiro (1994), provide a comprehensive categorization. The categories are:

- a) Acronyms
- b) Ellipsis
- c) Semantic shift or extension

- d) Lexico-semantic duplication and redundancy
 - e) Coinages or neologisms
 - f) Transfer
 - g) Semantic underdifferentiation
 - h) Analogy
- a) Acronyms

Acronyms are formed from initial letters of words that make up a descriptive phrase or proper name. (Quirk 1972: 103, Bamiro 1994: 54). These acronyms as Quirk (1972) says can be of two main types. They are acronyms, which are:

- i. pronounced as sequences of letters and can be called alphabetisms: eg. 'TNB'
- ii. pronounced as words: eg. MAS /mʌs/

b) Ellipsis

The term ellipsis denotes the deletion of the head- word in the nominal group structure (Bamiro 1994: 52). For the purpose of the study this process is also extended to the omission of articles, modifiers and plural markers and the verb component of the syntax.

Eg. He bought a video (cassette recorder),
In the example above, the head- word of the nominal group 'a video cassette recorder' cassette recorder, is deleted.

Eg. (Switch) off the light.
In the example above, the verb component of the syntax 'switch' is deleted.

c) Semantic shift or extension

The meaning of a word or a group of words in the new environment is extended. Bamiro (1994: 49) terms this as loan shift. The existing words in

English are imbued with new meaning and connotation in a new local view. The dictionary meaning differs from the local context meaning. In Malaysian English for example, the word "compound" is used to refer to the yard of a house while the CIDE defines the word "compound" as an enclosed area which contains a group of buildings.

d) Lexico-semantic duplication and redundancy

This refers to the duplication of lexical items either having identity of reference or belonging to the same semantic field or the use of a superfluous modifier for emphasis (Bamiro 1994: 51).

Eg 'They are very, very pretty.

"The four year- old girl who was found dead in a reservoir on Saturday, a day after she was kidnapped, was strangled to death". (NST p 7, 21 August 2001)

The CIDE defines the word "strangle" as "to kill (someone) by pressing their throat so that they cannot breathe." The words "to death" as used in this sentence are thus, redundant

e) Coinages or neologisms

These processes are necessary to accommodate new experiences, feelings, thought patterns, modes of life, culture and customs (Adegbija, 1989: 174).

New lexical items are created with nativized meanings which are peculiar to the local environment. Adegbija has recognized three main bases for lexical innovation.

- i. The existing lexical stock in English has produced new items or meaning like the word 'bride price' (African English).

- ii. The existing lexical stock of the mother tongue like the word 'kampung' in Malaysian English.
- iii. A hybrid of lexical stock of native or local language plus English, like the word 'akasa balls' in Nigerian English.

This process conveys new cognitive and sociolinguistic realities peculiar to the local environment.

f) Transfer or translation equivalents

Meaning foreign to English but present in the mother tongue is directly translated to English. This type of transfer helps to convey socio-cultural meaning in that society. Platt (1980) cites the following example from Malaysian English. "Night time", as translated from the Malay "*waktu malam*" instead of "at night".

g) Semantic Undershift

Semantic undershift neutralizes or undershifts emotive distinctions between certain lexical items. For example, Bamiro observed that most Nigerians do not differentiate between the epithets 'small' and 'little', the former being used in most contexts, even when emotive implications are involved (Bamiro 1994: 51)

h) Analogy

Lexico-semantic analogy or generalization describes the formation of new words on the basis of partial likeness or agreement in form or in sense with already existing words either in the mother tongue or in English.

The percentage of occurrence will be presented in a table. Each category will be discussed in detail with examples and statistical breakdown. This will be followed by identifying the causes of lexico-semantic variation in Malaysian English based on the categorization and exemplification.