CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

It is a common and accepted fact that English is widely used around the world these days and it will continue to gain more speakers and learners with each passing day. There are many reasons for the ever increasing and extensive use of English universally and one thing stands out clearly, English serves various functions to its multiple users who come from different parts of the world. As Fishman (1982:7) said:

…it is the language of diplomacy, the predominant language in which mail is written, the principle language of aviation and of broadcasting, the first language of nearly three hundred million people and an additional language of perhaps that many more.

English is the language of Information Technology. There are several reasons why people from all over the world are eager to learn English. For one thing, English confers a status of prestige on its speakers or learners that is still unsurpassed by any language in the world (Kachru, 1990). English also opens the door for modernization in a country in terms of the development of science and technology, trade, diplomacy, etc.

As English is adopted into a country, be it for prestige or modernization, it is inevitable that it should undergo a process of change that is partly linguistic and partly cultural. Hence, “not only is English still spreading but it is even being spread by non-English mother tongue interests” (Fishman, 1982:15). The rapid spread of English around the world has in turn fostered the growth of indigenous non-native varieties. These varieties of English are used both for international and intranational purposes. In his research, Kachru (1990) called to mind the significance of English in various parts of the
world especially in the developing nations where English has become the most vital tool for ideological and social change.

Due to its diversified roles, English is not only used as a native language, but also as a second language as well as a foreign language (Llamzon, 1981). As a second language, English is acquired after the mother tongue of any group within a region or country that mainly comprises multi-lingual speakers. The functions of English here stretch beyond the confines of a language classroom and it is used in other fields as well such as politics, law, medicine and government administration. On the other hand, English as a foreign language serves a more educational and academic purpose. English serves no internal communicative function in a country where it is learnt as a foreign language. As Wilkins (1972 in Llamzon, 1981:99) mentioned, the only purpose of English in this sense is to "increase the ease of contact" between the natives of a country and foreigners.

Be it as a second language or a foreign language, English has found its way into the culture and linguistic diversification of its multi-lingual speakers and with this, new varieties of English have emerged around the world that are distinct from their parent imported variety. These new varieties of English can be distinguished from native English or Standard English based on several features and characteristics (Llamzon, 1981). For instance, the new varieties of English are found in multi-lingual communities in which several linguistic behaviours take place such as borrowing, code-switching and semantic shift. These linguistic behaviours of the multi-lingual communities are very much culture-bound. Strevens (1978 in Llamzon, 1981) traced the "genetic parents" of
the new varieties of English to only two, i.e. British English and American English and these are known as the old varieties of English.

The new varieties of English can also be characterized sociolinguistically where their linguistic and cultural features are very much based on their domains of use such as the domains of home, friendship, and recreation (Llamzon, 1981). As a whole, the new varieties of English are distinguishable from the old varieties of English in terms of their linguistic and cultural features but more than that, the difference between the new varieties and the old varieties is that the roles and functions of the new varieties of English are not present in the old varieties of English (Llamzon, 1981).

Within the regions of Southeast Asia, the new varieties of English that have emerged resulted from colonization. As the colonial rulers began to impede on the daily lives of the local people, there was a need for a neutral language to be established between these two parties to maintain communication, especially between the colonial administrators and the local aristocracies (Baskaran, 1988; Lowenberg, 1986). Since such a need arose, the colonial administrators began to initiate the establishment of formal education for the local people. Moreover, formal education was needed by the local people so that they could be educated and trained to take up lower-ranking administrative and clerical positions in the colonial administration. With the growth of formal education, the use of the English language spread among the local people.

The arrival of merchants from Britain and Europe also led to the spread of English to the natives within the regions of Southeast Asia (Baskaran, 1988). As with administration, a neutral language was also fundamental in trade so that inter-group communication could take place between the local people and the foreign merchants.
These two factors were the main causes for the rapid spread of English in Southeast Asia. Nationalism proved to be another factor. As the regions within Southeast Asia experienced an awakening of nationalism and began to break free from their colonial rulers, English was adopted as the main language by some of these regions to set the spark of nationalism ablaze. In Kenya and Nigeria, English was known as the "link language" while in India, it was called the "associate official language". English was also known by other labels such as "additional language", "bridge language" and "strong second language" by other regions in Southeast Asia (Baskaran, 1988:70). As a result of these factors, not only did English spread rapidly, it became an institutionalized language within the regions of Southeast Asia. As mentioned by Baskaran (ibid), "English is institutionalized in the sense of being used and disseminated within the framework of language and corpus planning".

With the institutionalization of English, the process of "nativization" or "indigenization" occurred in which the local languages of a region were "filtered" into the English language. Such a phenomenon can be found in the English used in Malaysia where the process of "acculturation" and contextualization have resulted in the evolution of a Malaysian variety of English that has "nativized" features. As has been mentioned by Baskaran (1988) and Platt and Weber (1980), this "nativized" variety of English is usually used in informal verbal interactions within the more familiar and friendly domains such as home, friendship and recreation.
1.0.1 English in Malaysia

Just as it did in the other regions in Southeast Asia, English arrived in Malaysia as a result of colonization during the late eighteenth century. English played a dominant and important role in British colonial Malaya. It was the main medium for government administration and law. The local people who were equipped with a sufficient level of English proficiency could also seek employment as lower-ranking government administrators. As the colonial interests of the British expanded, they began to "need a cadre of English educated non-Europeans to function as an infrastructure of officials, business agents and clerks" (Lowenberg, 1986:73). Thus, private secular and mission-supported schools were set-up where English was taught and used as the medium of instruction. As a result of these schools that were entirely English-based, English ultimately became the dominant language in Malaysia, reflecting power and status. Gradually, the use of English extended to other areas in the government and private sector such as transportation, commerce and foreign trade. Apart from these, English was also used as the primary language in the mass media and in films imported for the entertainment of the elites (Platt and Weber, 1980; Le Page, 1962 in Lowenberg, 1986).

However, this scenario changed when Malaya achieved its independence in 1957. Thereon, the Malay language took centrestage. It replaced English as the official language and subsequently, it was made the sole national language of the country. The rationale for this official decision was to "unify the cultural and national aspirations of Malaya" (Le Page, 1962:138 in Lowenberg, 1986:74). However, few firm steps were taken by the government to implement this aim so much so that many natives still looked
towards English for educational and economic advancement (Hassan, 1975; Le Page, 1962 in Lowenberg, 1986).

In the late 1960’s, further steps were taken by the Malaysian government to phase-out English as the dominant language of Malaysia. One of the steps taken was the implementation of the National Language Policy in 1967 (Crismore, Ngeow and Soo, 1996). With the implementation of this policy, the role of English as the main medium of instruction in secondary and tertiary education was gradually taken over by Bahasa Malaysia, the national language of Malaysia. In spite of this policy, Malaysians still recognize the importance of English and time and again, Malaysian leaders have pointed out that English will indeed play a significant role in assisting Malaysians to achieve national goals by the year 2020 (Crismore, Ngeow and Soo, 1996).

Since the arrival of English in Malaya during the late eighteenth century, the ineluctable process of language change or “nativization” has taken place in the English language to accommodate the needs of its speakers. The English language in Malaysia has “deviated” from its parent variety with its myriad of “nativized” and “acculturated” linguistic elements, so much so that it has emerged to become a new variety of English, joining the ranks of other new Englishes such as Indian English, Philippine English and Singapore English and is thus fondly known by Malaysians as “Malaysian English”.

Malaysian English is a variety of English that is distinct from Standard English in terms of its linguistic features such as grammar, phonology and lexicon. Since the emergence of Malaysian English, controversies and conflicts have cropped up on the part of researchers and applied linguists. There are mixed views and reactions on Malaysian English. Some have commented that it is an incorrect version of Standard English.
However, many have also pointed out that Malaysian English is not "pidginized" or broken English since many educated Malaysians speak it. One needs to realize that Malaysian English is usually used in informal situations and it is in these situations that Malaysian English can be seen in its most creative and unique forms. According to Crismore, Ngeow and Soo (1996:320), Malaysian English is the preferred choice of Malaysians especially in informal situations and as a whole, it is a new variety that is slowly but surely gaining strength on Malaysian soil.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

As a nation that has experienced extensive and impetuous changes since independence, Malaysia is now emerging out of its Third World status to become a country that is fast developing economically and socially. With development, ties have been fostered between Malaysia and other countries so that a transfer of information and knowledge can take place. It follows then that a common language needs to be adopted by both parties so that effective communication can occur. Thus, the English language is used in Malaysia as the language used for international purposes, a tool to gain access to science and technology and to keep abreast with developments in the west. As English becomes increasingly crucial for these international purposes, steps have been taken by the Malaysian government to promote and accelerate the usage of English but without overshadowing the importance and usage of Bahasa Malaysia.

On a more informal level, English is used in speech, in daily conversations among Malaysians. It is the speech (especially the informal) of Malaysians that has triggered the emergence of localized features in the English language and these come in many forms
such as grammar, phonology and lexical items. As more Malaysians become increasingly comfortable with the use of a "Malaysianized" form of English, questions and views have emerged from different parties, namely researchers of applied linguistics, educators and academics as to whether or not it is feasible for Malaysians to continue speaking in an English that is distinctively Malaysian. As Malaysian English has become increasingly popular among Malaysians so much so that it can even be heard in the media, educators, especially, have become alarmed because they view Malaysian English or Manglish (as some would call it) as bad or broken English that is only spoken by uneducated Malaysians. They fear the worst for the standard of English in Malaysia. They have this notion that if drastic action is not taken to curtail this phenomenon, the standard of English in Malaysia will deteriorate further and the development of the nation in terms of science and technology and the economy will be at stake.

Thus, in recent years, policies have been implemented by the Malaysian government to raise the standard of English in Malaysia as well as to churn out a new batch of educated English speakers who can communicate well in English. Although the educators mean well and the effort of the Malaysian government is admirable, they need to come to a realization that as much as Standard English is fundamental for national progress, Malaysian English is just as important (especially in its spoken form) amongst Malaysians to strengthen ties and build relationships. But most importantly, Malaysian English stands out as a new variety of English that is able to represent the identity of Malaysia as a multi-ethnic and multi-cultural society.

Malaysian English must be regarded as a distinctive variety of English that is creative since English is used differently by Malaysians as compared to its native
speakers. English has been assimilated into the Malaysian context. Linguistic features that are distinctively Malaysian have been adopted into the English language. This aspect of Malaysian English should be taken into consideration as well by researchers of applied linguistics, educators and academics alike when reviewing the standard of English in Malaysia. We need not have to be apologetic about the way we speak (Wong, 1981 in Baskaran, 1988). We are Malaysians and hence it is only natural that we should speak like Malaysians. As Gonzales (1981, in Baskaran, 1988:92) mentioned, “...no matter how hard the English teacher tries, a local variety will continue to develop”.

1.2 Purpose of the Research

It is inevitable that a new variety of English should grow and develop in Malaysian English since Malaysia is a multi-ethnic and multi-cultural society. This variety of English, namely Malaysian English will be able to proudly represent the identity of Malaysians with its myriad of “Malaysianized” phonology, lexicon, semantics, etc.

This research focuses on the unique lexical items of Malaysian English. It is a study on terms that have taken on new meanings as a result of the English language being used in the Malaysian context and they are called stipulative terms. Hence, the objectives of this research are to:

a) Identify the stipulative terms used by Malaysians.

b) Find out how the stipulative definitions of the terms differ from their lexical definitions.

c) Show the situations/contexts where stipulative terms are used.
1.3 Significance of the Research

This research is significant because the researcher believes that it is able to present three positive views about Malaysian English.

Firstly, it shows that Malaysian English is a creative variety of English that has been able to enhance the verbal repertoires of its speakers. This aspect of Malaysian English is fundamental since it seems to have escaped the attention of second language acquisition researchers in English (Kachru, 1990).

Secondly, it shows that Malaysian English is not broken or "pidginized" English since it is used by educated Malaysian speakers of English as well. With its wide range of culturally embedded linguistic elements, it is the preferred choice in informal verbal interactions to achieve communicative competence.

Thirdly, it shows that Malaysian English is a developing and constantly evolving variety of English that is slowly gaining a place in the language choice of Malaysians and thus, it should be recognized in a positive sense as a new variety of English that enhances verbal interactions amongst its speakers.

1.4 Research Questions

The research attempts to investigate the following research questions:

a) What are some of the stipulative terms that are used by Malaysians in an academic institution?

b) How do the stipulative definitions identified vary from their lexical definitions?
c) In what situations/contexts are these stipulative terms used?

d) What makes these terms "creative" and "usable" in Malaysia and not "incorrect" or "deficient" when compared to Standard English?

1.5 Definition of Terms

The researcher will define and explain seven key terms that were used in this research as these terms are relatively new terms. The first two terms, namely stipulative definition and lexical definition were coined by logicians to explain the arbitrariness of language while the other five terms, namely nativization, acculturation, fossilization, interlanguage and approximation were created by applied linguists to explain the processes that take place in language learning and acquisition.

1.5.1 Stipulative Definition

The term "stipulative" is derived from logical thinking. It was created by logicians to indicate that languages, especially words, are arbitrary that is, they do not have fixed meanings since languages are constantly evolving and developing. Hence, the term "stipulative definition" was developed out of a realization that since language is not static, one who uses language must be definite about the meaning of his/her words or sentences so as not to cause confusion to others. With this point in mind, a stipulative definition assigns a new meaning to a word (Hurley, 1994).

Basically, there are two kinds of stipulative definitions. According to Hurley (1994), a stipulative definition may either involve coining a new word or giving a new
meaning to an old word. However, in this research, the researcher is only looking at the second type of stipulative definition.

The stipulative definition or meaning given to a word (stipulative term) is a deliberate act (Barker, 1989). Logicians have indicated several reasons for the emergence of stipulative definitions in words (Copi and Cohen, 1990).

A stipulative definition is introduced in a word for convenience, since a single word may serve as "short for" many words in a sentence, phrase or message. In other circumstances, a speaker may want to preserve confidentiality in his/her message. Hence, the speaker uses a word with a stipulative definition instead of the expected word so that no one else except the listener will be able to comprehend the speaker's message.

Economy in expression may be another reason for using words with stipulative definitions to express oneself. This would involve the introduction of a new term to mean what would otherwise require a long series of words and phrases to convey its meaning. Logicians have explained that a stipulative definition is a "completely arbitrary assignment of a meaning to a word" (Copi and Cohen, 1990:89). Therefore, a stipulative definition cannot be deemed correct or incorrect nor true or false.

1.5.2 Lexical Definition

The term "lexical definition" denotes the dictionary meaning of a word. Copi and Cohen (1990:89) put it precisely by saying:

... in contrast with a stipulative definition, which assigns a meaning to a word for the first time, a lexical definition may be true or false depending on whether it does or does not report the way a word is actually used.
Therefore, if a term is not new in that it already has an established meaning, then its definition is lexical and not stipulative (Copi and Cohen, 1990).

1.5.3 Nativization

“Nativization” is a term used to describe language change. A language is said to have undergone “nativization” if it emerges as a variety that is different from its “parent imported” language (Kachru, 1981 and Moag, 1977 in Richards, 1982:157). Instead of using “nativization”, some researchers call this process “indigenization” (Moag, 1977 in Moag, 1982:271) or “hybridization” (Whinnom in Richards, 1982:157). According to Richards (1982:158), “nativization” refers to “permanent additions or modifications to the code” of language such as English and this reflects the force of “cultural embedding”. These modifications and additions are distinctively the result of language transfer in which the linguistic features of a local language are transferred into another language (Lowenberg, 1986) in terms of phonology, syntax, lexicon, etc. For instance, the English language in Malaysia is greatly influenced by the local languages and dialects of Malaysia such as Bahasa Malaysia, Hokkien, Mandarin and Tamil. Thus, because of its nativization, the English in Malaysia is known as Malaysian English, a variety of English that is distinctively different from the other new varieties of English.

1.5.4 Acculturation

When a foreign or new language is adapted into a community so that it can be used in the community’s socio-cultural context, the language is said to have undergone the process of “acculturation”. This transfer of a language to a completely alien socio-
cultural context is motivated by the speakers' intention to equip themselves with a new or foreign language that can also be used effectively within their community. Kachru (1981, in Lowenberg, 1986:72) terms the acculturation of English as a process by which "English is equipped to function effectively in non-Western, multilingual speech communities".

1.5.5 Fossilization

The term "fossilization" expresses a static condition in language. According to Selinker (1972, in Kachru, 1990:9), "fossilization" refers to:

...linguistic items, rules and subsystems which speakers of a particular NL (native language) will tend to keep in their IL (interlanguage), relative to a particular TL (target language).

For some researchers and theorists, the new varieties of English are considered "deficient" forms of English that cannot emerge to become standard varieties of English because there are just too many "interferences" from their local languages and these "interferences" are the results of the fossilization of a language. Hence, fossilization is viewed as a negative process since it hampers a learner's opportunity to learn a particular second language in its "purest" sense.

1.5.6 Interlanguage

"Interlanguage" is regarded as a developmental by-product because as a language learner is in the process of learning a new language, he/she produces a type of language. Hence, interlanguage, according to Richards (1985 in Kachru, 1990:9) is "the type of language produced by second and foreign language learners who are in the process of
learning a language”. For example, when a Malaysian learns English, he/she will actually acquire an English language that is different from the target language due to his/her socio-cultural background. In the Malaysian context, this new interlanguage has deviated into Malaysian English.

1.5.7 Approximation

Just like “fossilization”, “approximation” is viewed as a negative term used to define a second or foreign language that falls short of being equivalent to its parent imported language due to fossilization. According to skeptics, speakers of the new varieties of English are eager to learn and speak Standard English. However, due to lack of exposure, insufficient instruction and the interference of their mother tongue, the type of English they speak is merely an approximation of Standard English.

Having introduced the topic of this research in this chapter, the researcher will now discuss the relevant literature pertaining to this research in the following chapter.