

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

4.0 Introduction

The chapter presents the findings based on an ethnographic research approach. A total of 24 conversations were recorded in a time span of 1,110 minutes. The conversations were recorded by the researcher as well as by the helpers assigned by the researcher. The information gathered in all the 24 conversations is used to help in answering the research questions. The researcher transcribed all the conversations for the sake of reference and clarity (See Appendix D). All the relevant information from the conversations is reported in the form of tables, excerpts, and examples. Table 4.1 shows the age group and the number, and minutes of conversation that were transcribed:

Table 4.1: Number and Minutes of Conversations

Age Group	No. of Conversation	Minutes
10-20 Years	08	340
21-46 Years	09	390
50 ≥ Years	07	380
Total	24	1,110

In addition, a total of 8 oral interviews were conducted to find out why Malaysian Tamils use Tamil in their English conversations in the domain of friendship. Four of the interviews were transcribed for the purpose of clarification

and reference (see Appendix C). These informal conversational interviews also helped the researcher to analyze why Tamil lexical items are used in the spoken English of Malaysian Tamils in the domain of friendship.

On the whole, the analysis of the recorded conversations and informal interviews allowed the researcher to note, glean insights, assess, and draw conclusions as to why Tamil lexical items are used by the participants in this study. The conversations and interviews also aided the researcher in noting the intended semantic meanings of the Tamil lexical items used by the participants. This helped the researcher to analyse and assess the influence of Tamil lexical items in the participants' English conversations.

The other sections in this chapter will discuss in detail the types of Tamil lexical items used by the participants and the reasons they were used.

4.1 Tamil-primary School Educated and the Non-Tamil School Educated English-speaking Malaysian Tamils

Out of the 84 participants who took part in the study 41 (49%) are Tamil-primary school educated. The rest of the 43 (51%) participants come from Non-Tamil school backgrounds. This is shown in detail in Table 4.2:

Table 4.2: The Number and Percentage of Tamil-Primary School Educated and Non-Tamil Educated Malaysian Tamils

Age Group	Participants		Tamil-school Educated		Non-Tamil School Educated	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
10-20 Years	30	36	14	47	16	53
21-49 Years	33	39	18	55	15	45
50 ≥ Years	21	25	09	43	12	57
Total	84	100	41	49	43	51

The English-speaking Malaysian Tamils in this study who are not Tamil educated are able to speak, read, and write in English and Bahasa Melayu. All the 43 Non-Tamil-primary school educated participants in this study could understand and speak the Tamil Language. However, only 5 (12%) of the 43 participants could read and write very well in the Tamil Language. A further 7 (17%) claimed that they could read, and write in simple Tamil. All the 41 Tamil-school educated participants could speak, read, and write in Tamil. Table 4.4 shows the distribution of participants according to their ability to read, write, and speak in Tamil.

Table 4.3: Distribution of Participants According to Their Ability to Read, Write, and Speak in Tamil

Type of Education	No.	Very Good Reading & Writing		Average Reading & Writing		Can Only Speak Tamil	
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Tamil-school Educated	41	38	92	03	08	-	-
Non-Tamil School Educated	43	05	12	07	17	31	71
Total	84	43	51	10	12	31	37

Table 4.3 shows that all the participants in this study can understand and speak Tamil. Out of that, 84 participants, 53 (63%) can speak, read, and write in Tamil. The remaining 31 (37%) participants who were only able to speak Tamil did not have their primary education in Tamil.

4.2 Use of Tamil Lexical Items

This section indicates the Tamil lexical items used by the Malaysian Tamils who speak English in the domain of friendship. A detailed analysis of the Tamil lexical items will be given in the following sections.

The number of Tamil lexical items that were used by the participants were categorized according to appropriate, meaningful units. For example, even though the term "**Muniandi Sami**" (Muniandi God) has two words, it is regarded as one lexical item in terms of its meaning (Refer to 1.6.1 and 1.6.2). The participants of

this study used Tamil lexical items in the form of words, expressions in the form of collocations, and idioms to express specific meanings in their English conversations (Refer to 1.6.1.2).

4.2.1 Use of Tamil Lexical Items by the 10 – 20 Year Age Group.

This section will discuss in detail Tamil lexical items used by the 10 – 20 Year Age Group. In addition, the reasons why the Tamil lexical items are used in the English conversations of the participants will also be analyzed. Insights and conclusions will be gleaned through the analysis of the recorded conversations and informal interviews.

4.2.1.1 Use of Single Tamil Words

Careful analysis of the Tamil words used in their English conversations of the 10-20 Year Age Group revealed a pattern of usage in the Tamil lexical items. Among the types of Tamil lexical items used are as shown in Table 4.4:

Table 4.4: Use of Tamil Words in the 10-20 Year Age Group

• Names of Indian and Tamil Food	" rasam " (Indian soup), " puttu " (Indian snack), " pori " (crackers), " laddu " (a kind of sweet delicacy), " payasam " (sweet porridge), " urundai " (a kind of snack), " kari " (curry), " appalam " (Indian crackers), " vadai " (a kind of Indian snack made from dhal).
• Hindu Religious Terms	" koil " (temple), " sami " (priest),

	" maalai " (garland), " poojai " (prayer).
• Names of Indian Musical Terms	Sangitham (Indian music).
• Kinship Terms	" pathi " (grandmother), " tata " (grandfather), " akka " (sister), " periappa " (one's father's elder brother).
• Insults	" pandi " (pig), " kaluthai " (owl), " poda " (go away for males), " Dei " (Hey-for males), " paeci " (devil), " kothan " (owl), " korangu " (monkey), " naai " (dog).
• Vulgarities	" mayiru " (hair) and other Tamil vulgar words.
• Kinship Terms used as Nicknames	" Maccan " (Brother in law), " Mama " (uncle), " Mami " (old lady).
• Body Parts	" vayiru " (stomach), " kayyi " (hand), " mandae " (forehead).
• Expressions of Fear	" pakkaran " (look), " appuram " (then).
• Fashion Words	" Kushboo " (name of a popular actress).
• Coined Words	" lollu ", " kaima ", " paikka ", " takkar " (Refer to 4.2.1.8).
• Complaints to Friends	" parula " (look) " suudu " ((It's) hot).
• Questions Words	" enna " (what), " enge " (where), " yaru " (who).
• Names of Tamil People	" Raju ", " Dorai ", " Babu ", " Ravi ", " Annu ", " Susila ".

4.2.1.1.1 Names of Indian and Tamil Food

Names of Indian and Tamil food such as "**rasam**" (Indian soup), "**nethili**" (a kind of small salted fish which is much used by the Malaysian Tamils, as well as by the Malays and Chinese in Malaysia), and "**pori**" (crackers) are mentioned in Tamil by the participants. This can be seen in Excerpt 1:

Excerpt 1:

Q: Where can cook **nethili** sambel ("anchovy" gravy) all inside there?

S: Sheau May (a kind of Chinese food), fried kacang, fried fish and **rasam** (Indian soup). Wow!

Conversation 1

Names of food like "**rasam**" can only be best described in Tamil because the word "**rasam**" specifically refers to a kind of soup which tastes sour, prepared by Indian families. "**Rasam**" is specifically prepared by the Tamils as a kind of end of meal soup, and as thus it has a cultural connotation attached to it. So, the English word "soup" does not carry the exact cultural meaning as "**rasam**". "**Nethili**" and "**pori**" are probably used because it is very common among the Malaysian Tamils to use these Tamil words in their English conversations. The word "**nethili**" is also used because its nearest English term "anchovy" is not much used in the Malaysian context. Further, the actual meaning of "anchovy" may have a different connotation to a Westerner. This is because the term "anchovy" is referred to a kind of fish that is larger than the Malaysian "**nethili**". "Anchovy" is used in Italians cuisine and carries a different connotation as compared to the Tamil "**nethili**". Many educated Malaysians prefer to use the Bahasa Melayu term "ikan bilis" in their English, and even Tamil conversations. This is because "ikan bilis" is an expression from Bahasa

Melayu, which is very common in the English conversations of Malaysian Tamils, and also in the English conversations of other Malaysians. In fact, "ikan bilis" is considered a Malaysian English word and as thus, is easier to understand because is commonly used by many Malaysians (Rosemary Khoo, 1992: 111). "Nethili" carries almost the same connotation as "ikan bilis", and this explains why the participants used "nethili" in their English conversations.

4.2.1.1.2 Names of Hindu Religious Terms

Hindu religious terms such as "koil" (temple), "sami" (priest), and "maalai" (garland) are mentioned in Tamil as in the case of the Excerpt 2:

Excerpt 2:

L: I went to **koil** (temple) on Friday *lah*.

K: He tink (thinks) he's a **sami** (priest) or what?

Expect to put **maalai** (garland) and all *ah*!

Conversation 6

The terms "koil", "sami", and "maalai" are mentioned in Tamil because these words convey religious meanings. Most of the religious words like "koil", "sami", "karma" (Hinduism rule of cause and effect), "dhosyam" (sin) are used in the religious context. For example, the Tamil word "sami" specifically refers to the Hindu priest, and not any other priest. The English translation of "sami" (priest) will not convey the actual cultural and religious connotation as the Tamil "sami".

The same applies to the word "maalai". The English word "garland" does not carry the exact cultural connotation as "maalai". This is because the traditional Tamil "maalai" is specifically prepared using the jasmine flowers, which are tied

together with the fiber of the banana plant as string. A "**maalai**" is also prepared by using other flowers like red roses and yellow chrysanthemums too. This is because Hinduism considers white, yellow, and red as religiously auspicious colours. On the other hand, the English "garland" carries the connotation that a "garland" is just a "garland" that can be prepared with any kind of flowers irrespective of their colours and does not have any religious significance (See also 4.3.1.2 and 4.4.1.1.2).

Other words such as "**karma**" (Hinduism rule of cause and effect), "**dhosyam**" (sin) are so culture and religious specific, and have their own semantic meanings. This explains why the participants used Tamil words such as "**koil**", "**sami**", "**maalai**", "**karma**", and "**dhosyam**" to express themselves in their English conversations.

4.2.1.1.3 Names of Indian Musical Terms

The participants mentioned names of Indian musical terms such as "**Sangitham**" in Tamil during their English conversations as can be seen in Excerpt 3:

Excerpt 3:

M: She's very good in **Sangitham** (Indian classical music).

Conversation 7

Terms like "**Sangitham**" (Indian Classical Music) will not carry the exact connotation when translated in English. This is because "**Sangitham**" specifically refers to the classical music of Indians and has a cultural and religious connotation attached to it. For the Hindus, music is linked to the temples (**koil**), where traditional dances, and songs of praise to the Hindu Gods (**thevaram**) are practised. The

connotation of **"Sangitham"** is still linked to the Hindu culture and religion, and this could explain why the participants used the word **"Sangitham"** in their English conversations.

4.2.1.1.4 Kinship Terms

The participants addressed people and relations by using Tamil words such as **"mama"** (uncle), **"periappa"** (mother's elder brother), **"tata"** (grandfather) and **"pathi"** (grandmother), such as illustrated in Excerpt 4:

Excerpt 4:

M: My **periappa** (mother's elder brother) came the other day.

L: I love my **tata** (grandfather), my **pathi** (grandmother) very fussy one!

Conversation 6

Family terms like **"mama"**, **"tata"**, and **"pathi"** are used to create a closer bond among the participants. These terms are used even though there are English equivalents because these terms convey the exact relationship intended by the participants.

Moreover, family terms like **"periappa"** (one's father's elder brother) and **"periamma"** (one's mother's elder sister) are mentioned in Tamil because there are no specific English equivalents for these terms. The nearest equivalents for **"periappa"** and **"periamma"** in English are "uncle" and "aunty", but these words do not convey the added meaning of **"periappa"** and **"periamma"**. **"Periappa"** has added semantic meaning because it specifically refers to "one's father's elder brother" and **"periamma"** specifically refers to "one's mother's elder sister". These semantic features are not present in the English words "uncle" and "aunty". In

addition, the participants can establish who these people are by mentioning them in Tamil instead of explaining their relationship in English. For example, it is easier and faster for participant M to say, "My **periappa** came the other day." than to say, "My mother's elder brother came the other day."

In addition, terms like "**periappa**" (father's elder brother) and "**periamma**" (mother's elder sister) also have specific Tamil cultural values, and cultural hierarchy that express relationships with regards to one's age and gender. For example the terms "**peria~**" (elder ~) and "**sinna ~**" (younger ~), act as age markers to indicate relationship with one's parents' siblings (Also refer to 4.3.1.5 for further details). As such, it is possible to find Tamil kinship terms such as "**mama**", "**tata**", "**pathi**", "**periappa**", and "**periamma**" even in English-speaking Tamil families. This is because these terms have cultural values and they establish and reinforce the Tamil and Indian family hierarchy.

4.2.1.1.5 Kinship Terms used as Nicknames

The participants used Tamil words such as "**maccan**" (brother-in-law), "**mama**" (uncle), and "**mami**" (old lady) in their English conversations as nicknames. This can be seen in Excerpt 5:

Excerpt 5:

L: Dei, **maccan** (Hey, brother-in-law). How are you?

Conversation 5

On the whole, the participants of the 10-20 Year Age Group used a lot of nicknames such as "**maccan**", "**mama**", and "**mami**" to address their close friends. The original meaning of "**maccan**" is "brother-in-law". However, the 10-20 Year

Age Group used "**maccan**" to their close friends probably to express their solidarity, that is to make them feel even closer with their friends, of which a strong sense of Tamil identity is the core of it. The word "**maccan**" has a positive connotation attached to it. "**Maccan**" is used to express solidarity to a friend who is close enough to be a "brother-in-law". In Malaysia, many non-Tamils also use the word "**maccan**" to their friends. The word "**maccan**" could be equated to the Malay "brudder" (brother) which is popular with some Malay speakers. "Brudder" (brother) is also used as an expression of solidarity and to gain entry into a group of friends.

On the other hand, the word "**mami**" was used with a negative connotation that is, to tease a female friend who is traditional in her appearance and dressing (Refer to Conversation 4). The helper who recorded Conversation 4 reported that the participants used the word "**mami**" to the girl because she was their friend, and also because she had long hair, and was always dressed in a "punjabi" suit, even when going to a movie. However, the girl was not offended because she knew that her friends were only teasing her.

4.2.1.1.6 Mock Insults

Tamil words such as "**pandi**" (pig), "**kaluthai**" (donkey), "**poda**" (go away – for males), "**paai**" (devil), "**kothan**" (owl), and "**Dei**" (Hey – for males) are mentioned by the participants. For example the participants used Tamil words such as "**pandi**" (pig), and "**kaluthai**" (donkey) in Excerpt 6. The participants used names of animals such as "**pandi**", and "**kaluthai**" to scold their friends in a friendly manner.

Excerpt 6:

M: How to like the bullshit, **pandi** (pig) *lah*.

T: Eh, eh, eh his hair, looks like a *EKOR* (tail).

Conversation 2

The participants also called their friend "**pandi**", "**kothan**", and "**paei**" in a playful manner without upsetting their friends. In this way, the participants are able to express their solidarity as friends and as fellow Tamils. This trend is found largely in the 10-20 Year Age Group, and the friends in this age group use these words because it is an accepted norm in their friendship domain to playfully scold their friends by using such terms. This trend also helps in enhancing the solidarity among the friends as fellow Tamils. It also shows that the closer the bond, the more impolite one can be with their friends. This is because the solidarity between the friends will reduce their distance and they will be less formal with their friends. This phenomenon is indicated in the use of the mock insults as shown in Excerpt 6.

However, if "**pandi**", "**kothan**", and "**paei**" were used outside the domain of friendship, or in the family domain, then these terms will cause hurt, and act as real insult words to the intended person.

The participants also used various Tamil vulgar words such as "**mayiru**" (hair) to their friends as in Excerpt 7:

Excerpt 7:

T: **Poda** (Go away (male)), I don't care, **mayiru** (hair)!

Conversation 6

The participants used vulgar words such as "**mayiru**" when they were unhappy about a person or situation. Elements of anger usually triggered the use of Tamil vulgar words. This is different from the use of mock insulting words such as "**pandi**", and "**kaluthai**". However, none of the participants in the 10-20 Year Age Group took offence to this. In fact, the participants laughed the whole matter off when a particular vulgar word was uttered. This shows the participants' ability to ward off issues that could jeopardize their friendship. In order to gain entry into the group of friends the participants used such words as "**mayiru**" because they consider it "cool" and the "in thing" to use such words and this could help strengthen the solidarity among the friends.

However, they would probably not be allowed to use words like "**mayiru**" to other adults, and to their family members. For example, one participant in Interview 1 said that his father will "whack" him if he catches him using Tamil vulgar words. Another participant in Interview 2 mentioned that his mother will "scold" him if he uses words like "**paei**" (devil), "**kothaan**" (owl), or "**sakkai**" (aborigine) to his brother.

4.2.1.1.7 Body Parts

The participants mentioned body parts such as **mandae** (head), **kayyi** (hand), and **vayiru** (stomach) in Tamil to their friends as in Excerpts 8 and 9:

Excerpt 8:

L: Aiyō! My **kayyi** (hand) aiyō, kena lah. Got tissue not?

Conversation 3

Excerpt 9:

R: **Mandae** ((Your) head) *lah!* Donno (Do not know) who. Not **Raju**.

Conversation 4

The participants used Tamil to mention her hand to express disgust as in Excerpt 8. Participant L used Tamil to mention her hand because she had some glue on her hand, and wanted to wipe it off with some tissue.

"**Mandae**" is probably used more as a way of chiding a friend, which is similar to the Malaysian English "Your head lah!". Malaysians usually use the expression "Your head lah!" to scold a friend in jest, and is also used as a general way of not agreeing with someone or something. In the case of Excerpt 9, Participant R expresses his disbelief that "**Raju**" would not have agreed to go for a particular movie by using the word "**mandae**". Here, the Tamil word "**mandae**" carries the connotation of "You silly head!" and is used in a friendly way to express disbelief about a friend's attitude about movies.

4.2.1.1.8 Coined Words

The researcher located 4 coined words, which sounded like Tamil words in the English conversations of the participants of the 10 – 20 Year Age Group. Coined words are words that include the latest words and expressions used by the participants of this study. The coined words located in the study are as shown:

- "**Lollu**" – is a coined word used to refer to an irritating friend/person.
- "**Kaima**" – is a coined word, which is used to warn someone.
- "**Paikka**" – is a coined word for a shabby person.
- "**Takkar**" – is a person who is handsome/beautiful, and attractive.

On the whole, the participants used "lollu", "kaima", "paikka", and "takkar" to express emotions such as excitement, anger, and irritation and to describe people. These words are used in the basilect variety of Tamil, and are probably not found in the more standard or acrolect variety of Tamil. The participants must have used the coined words to gain entry into their peer group and to show their friends that they too, know the latest coined words, just like their friends. For example, the coined word, "lollu" which was introduced through the Tamil movies, was used in the English conversation of the participants, probably as a group identity marker. The participants also could have used coined words such as "lollu", "kaima", "paikka", and "takkar" to show that they too know the latest coined words used in Tamil movies. In this way, the group identity and the solidarity of the friends is enhanced.

Tamil words such as "**Kushbo**" are taken from Tamil movies, and are used as coined and fashion words by the participants.

Excerpt 10:

M: **Dei** (Hey), look at **Kushbo**, cute ah?

Conversation 4

Fashion words are words that are picked from Tamil movies and other current coined words. These fashion words are usually used for a particular period and are later forgotten or discarded when the fashion trend changes according to time. The participants used words from Tamil movies, and names of Tamil actresses such as "**Kushbo**" as fashion words, at the time of the recording of the conversations. However, these words will quickly go out of fashion when the particular movie, actor, or actress goes out of fashion or is no more popular.

4.2.1.1.9 Question Words

The participants also asked question by using Tamil words such as "**Enge?**" and "**Ama va?**" as in Excerpt 11.

Excerpt 11:

N: Eh, **Maccan** (Brother-in-law)? Coming ah? Eh, eh, where's everybody?
Enge? (Where?)

Conversation 6

Excerpt 12:

P: **Ama va?** (Is that so?) ((LAUGHTER)) **Antha alu** (That man) look at the line. *Potong trip*. (Cutting queue.)

Conversation 4

Tamil question words such as in Excerpts 11 and 12 indicate that the participants used Tamil lexical items to clarify things or issues that need further explanation such as to find out where everyone in the particular family has gone, and to assure a certain fact.

4.2.1.1.10 Names of Tamil People

The participants mentioned names of Tamil friends in Tamil. However, the researcher noticed that the trend of Tamil names seem to have become modern in the sense that there were more Anglicized, and trendy names such as "**Leena**", and "**Sheela**" in this age group. This may be due to the influence of Westernization in the modern Tamil families. Other names such as "**Parveen**" has a North Indian touch to it. However, traditional names such as "**Babu**"(as in Excerpt 13) and "**Hema**" were also found in the study.

Excerpt 13:

L: We are going now. Must wash hands first *lah*. Eh, did you see **Babu**?

Conversation 3

4.2.2 Use of Tamil Expressions

The 10 – 20 Year Age Group of participants also used Tamil expressions in their English conversations with their friends. Even though, these expressions carry more than one word, they are found to carry single meanings. These include idiomatic expressions, and other institutionalized lexical relations (Refer to 1.6.1.2). The Tamil expressions used in this study are underlined in Table 4.5:

Table 4.5: Use of Tamil Expressions in the 10-20 Year Age Group

• Show Dissatisfaction and to Curse	Na (I (got)) 59 lah. Pochi (Gone), the <u>sorrie nai</u> (infected dog).
• Express Crude and Vulgar Terms	<u>Ada poda</u> (Be gone (male)), I will go by myself.
• Sing Tamil Songs	<u>Sonia, Sonia sokka vaikkum ...</u>
• Complain	Alamak, <u>sariyana lollu pudichavan da</u> . (God, he's an irritating person.) I'll come afterwards.
• Express Irritation	Useless, forever <u>sariyana kanjan</u> (a very stingy fellow).
• Express Surprise	<u>Ada Kadavule</u> , it's raining outside lah!
• Seek Attention	<u>Aiyo, aiyo, amma!</u> (Oh, oh mother!)
• Warn People	<u>Pathu po!</u> (Go carefully!)

4.2.2.1 Mock Curses and Insults

This age group used names of animals to scold and to curse their friends. Interestingly, "naai" (dog), "paei" (devil), "kaluthai" (donkey) were frequently used by the participants (See 4.2). Some of these Tamil terms were mentioned in short expressions such as in Excerpt 14:

Excerpt 14:

M: Na (I (got)) 59 *lah*. Pochi (Gone), the sorrie naai (infested dog).

Stingy fellow.

Conversation 2

However, the participants were not offended when their friends scolded them by using names of animals. This is because the participants are all friends, and thus most of the scolding was taken lightly, and the mock curses and insults did not offend them. In fact, this way of talking seems to create a stronger sense of solidarity among the friends.

The participants of the 10-20 Year Age Group also code switched to Tamil vulgar expressions in their English conversations. However, other Tamil words such as "mayiru" were used more frequently than other Tamil vulgar expressions. This is as shown in Excerpt 15:

Excerpt 15:

M: Poda maviru (Go away (male) hair), I'm not going to bother.

L: Poda (Go away (male)). Nee (You) eh, eh, eh downan (do not want) means

• =

Conversation 6

The participants were not offended by these vulgar, as well as other curse words and expressions. In a way, these expressions too were taken as agents of solidarity in this age group, and this explain why the participants were not offended by the vulgar words. The analysis of the recorded conversations shows that many of the male participants of this age group use Tamil vulgar words in their English conversations with their friends. Only one female participant of this Age Group used the Tamil vulgar word "**mayiru**" in her English conversation. Besides "**mayiru**", the female participants of the 10 – 21 Year Age Group of this study did not use any other Tamil vulgar words or expressions. However, no definite conclusions can be made because the female participants may have purposely refrained from mentioning vulgar words in their conversation, knowing that their conversation is being recorded.

This is because the Tamil culture expects an individual, particularly a female to be polite in their conversation with others. However, if a Tamil female uses vulgar words and expressions in her speech, then she will be marked as rude and unfeminine. In fact, a woman who uses vulgar words in her conversation with others is questioned as "**Enna pomabalae?**" (What a woman?) which has a derogatory connotation attached to it (Refer to Conversation 16). Thus, in order to escape these derogatory implications, the female participants of this study may have purposely refrained from using vulgar words in their conversations with their friends. In fact, Freed (1996:70), explains that "gender plays an important part in the process of analysing the interaction of language and social life of people".

4.2.2.2 Tamil Songs

The participants of the 10-20 Year Age Group sang lyrics of Tamil songs in the midst of their English conversations with their friends. Most of the Tamil songs were from popular Tamil movies. This is as shown in Excerpt 16:

Excerpt 16:

Q: **Aiyo**, bread smell so strong lah. **Sonia, Sonia, Sokka Vaikkum Sonia...**

(**Sonia, Sonia**, Intoxicating **Sonia**... (Lyric of a Tamil song))

S: Stop that nonsense lah!

Conversation 1

Note: "**Sonia**" is the name of a Tamil girl.

Both the male and female participants sang lyrics of Tamil songs during their English conversations with their friends. However, the songs were not sung in full. They are usually left unfinished without any complete meanings of their own. The participants probably sang the latest songs from Tamil movies because it is considered the "in thing" to use such lyrics among their friends. The participants also consider it "cool" to sing lyrics from Tamil movies that their friends know. It is also an indication of the informal situation in which the participants are in, that is the domain of friendship. The participants also sang lyric from Tamil songs in order to attract the attention of their friends, and also when talking about light topics such as when discussing their boyfriends (See Conversation 2).

4.2.2.3 Complain to Friends

The participants also complain to their friends by using Tamil expressions in their English conversations. The Tamil expressions are used subconsciously by the participants, and they code switch from English to Tamil in their conversation, as in Excerpt 17 below:

Excerpt 17:

R: *Alamak, sariyana lollu pudichavan da*. (God, he's an irritating person.)

I'll come afterwards.

Conversation 4

Excerpt 17 is interesting because the participant R has actually used the coined word "lollu" to complain about someone. In fact, the actual meaning of "sariyana lollu pudichavan da" (God, he's an irritating person.) goes beyond the given translation because of the word "lollu". This is because "lollu" in this context, is referred to person who nags to the extent of irritation. It is difficult to find an English word to describe "a person who nags to the extent of irritation". This added cultural connotation explains why Participant R mentioned the Tamil expression "sariyana lollu pudichavan da".

4.2.2.4 Expressions of Irritation

The participants also used Tamil expressions to express their irritation about someone as in Excerpt 18:

Excerpt 18:

M: Useless fellow sariyana kanjan (a very stingy fellow). *Takut nak bayar duit gam!* (Scared to pay for the glue!)

Conversation 3

The term "sariyana kanjan" implies that the person in discussion is a very stingy person, so much so that he will not even pay for the glue that he had used. Here the Tamil word "sariyana" helps in intensifying the meaning of "kanjan" and as thus, "sariyana" is said to have an institutionalized lexical relation with "kanjan" (See 1.6.1.2). Participant M's metaphorical code switching (Gumperz: 1972) is interesting. She uses Tamil to mention "sariyana kanjan" (a very stingy person) to inform her friend that the "stingy person" in discussion is not just "stingy" but carries the connotation that the "stingy" person is an "extremely stingy fellow". This is because it is very normal for a Tamil to associate "sariyana" with an extremely stingy person, and hence it is considered almost a norm to associate "sariyana" with "kanjan" to intensify the meaning of "kanjan". However, the English translation of "sariyana kanjan" (a very stingy fellow) does not carry the exact connotation of the Tamil "sariyana kanjan" because "sariyana kanjan" is a culturally loaded expression which is difficult to explain without taking the Tamil culture into consideration. In fact, the researcher found out from participant M that the Tamil expression "sariyana kanjan" carries the connotation that the "kanjan" (stingy person) is stingy to the extreme that he won't even spare a few "sen" (coins)

to the welfare of the Hindu "koil" (temple). This is because the Hindus consider the charity done towards the Hindu temples, as the highest and most noble deed for a Hindu.

4.2.2.5 Expressions of Surprise

The participants of the 10-21 Year Age Group also used Tamil expressions such as "**Ada Kadavule!**" (Oh God!), to express surprise as in Excerpt 19:

Excerpt 19:

M: Ada kadavule (Oh God), it's raining outside! Heavy lah!

Conversation 6

The participants of this age group also used "Alamak" (a Bahasa Melayu word) which may be equated to "**Ada Kadavule!**" in Tamil. However, the Tamil cultural and religious connotation found in "**Ada Kadavule!**" is absent in "Alamak" (See Also 4.3.2.1).

4.2.2.6 Attention Seeking and Persuading

The informal interviews conducted in the 10 – 20 Year Age Group also revealed that the participants use Tamil lexical items and expressions to fit into a group of fellow Tamil friends and to get attention as in Excerpt 20:

Excerpt 20:

X: And then I wen (went) out, quickly. But my mother, she will never let one.

Y: *Bising* (scold) *pannunangala?* (Did she scold you?)

X: I *cabut* (ran off) only. And then, my brother also *JOIN ME!*

Y: *Aiyo!* And =

[

S: = Kasu mela, kasu vaccu.((Lyric of a Tamil song)) *Dei wanga da polam!* (Hey, come let's go!) *Aiyo, aiyo, amma* (mother)!

Conversation 1

Excerpt 20 indicates how Participant S tries to attract attention from Participants Y and X. Participant S starts singing a popular lyric of a Tamil song and then says: "*Dei wanga da polam!*" (Hey, come let's go!), to persuade his friends. Then, he uses the Tamil expression "*Aiyo, aiyo, amma*" to further attract his friends' attention to go somewhere. Thus, it is clear that Participant S used the Tamil expressions to his friends for emotional reasons such as to seek attention and to persuade.

4.2.2.7 Advice and Warnings

The analysis of the data shows that Tamil is used to advice and warn people as shown in Excerpt 21:

Excerpt 21:

P: **Dei** (Hey), pathu po (go carefully)!

R: **Sari** (Okay).

Conversation 4

Participant P used the Tamil expression "pathu po" to warn his friend. This indicates that in difficult situations, and when emotions are involved, the participants use Tamil to express themselves.

In the case of Excerpt 21, even though Participant P uses the crude term "**Dei**" (Hey) to his friend, his deep care, advice and warning is reflected by the use of the Tamil expression "pathu po". The use of "**Dei**" (Hey) indicates the group solidarity of the friends and "pathu po" reflects the Tamil cultural connotation of advising and warning someone, in this case a friend.

It is also an accepted norm among the Tamils to say "pathu po" to friends, and even family members. In the Tamil culture, it is rude to just say "**Po**" (Go) to anyone who is leaving. This is because "**Po**" (Go) conveys the connotation that the person is leaving never to return, or that some life threatening evil might occur to him on his journey home. This phenomenon indicates the institutionalized lexical relation found between the Tamil words "**pathu**" and "**po**". Thus, "pathu po" carries much Tamil cultural connotation of advice, warning, and also sincere well wishes. This explains why Participant P used "pathu po" to his friend in Tamil. The Tamil expression "pathu po" can be roughly be equated to the English expression

"Have a safe journey back". However, this English translation cannot express the exact meaning of the Tamil "pathu po" because of the cultural connotation present in it.

4.2.3 Conclusion

The 10-20 Year Age Group of participants of this study code switched to Tamil in the midst of their English conversations. Tamil lexical items were used for various reasons such as to fill in the lexical gap in English. Tamil lexical items were also used to convey Tamil cultural and religious terms. The connotations of these Tamil terms helped in enriching the quality of the participants' English conversations by making the conversations more meaningful and satisfying. The next section will discuss the use of Tamil lexical items in the 21-49 Year Age Group of participants of this study.

4.3 Use of Tamil Lexical Items in the 21 – 49 Year Age Group

This section will discuss the Tamil lexical items used by the 21 – 49 Year Age Group. The reasons for the usage of the Tamil lexical items will also be discussed in detail. Excerpts from the recorded conversation will be used to substantiate the results of the findings.

4.3.1 Use of Single Tamil Words

The 21 – 49 Year Age Group of participants used Tamil words in their English conversations with their friends in a similar way as the 10-20 Year Age Group. The categories are as shown in Table 46:

Table 4.6: Use of Tamil Words in the 21-49 Year Age Group

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Names of Food and Ingredients in Indian and Tamil Traditional Dishes 	<p>"erachi" (meat), "marakari" (vegetables), "murunge" ("murunge" leaves), "tosai" (a kind of Indian food), "rava" (a kind of Indian food), "kadugu" (mustard seeds), "vengayam" (onions), "mochakottae" (a kind of lentils), "manjal" (saffron), "meen talai" (fish head).</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hindu Festivals, and Items Related to Hindu Religion, Hindu Gods, Goddesses, and Hindu Religious Associations and Holy and Taboo Words. 	<p>"Deepavali" (a Hindu Festival), "pusari" (priest), "poojai" (prayer), "ponggasoru" (boiled sweet rice), "Swami" (High Priest), "pu" (flowers), "koil" (temple), "Muniandi Sami" (Muniandi God), "Vidya Letchumy", "Thairia Letchumy" (Various forms of the Goddess "Letchumy"), "Letchumy Dhyna Mandram" (Association for the Goddess "Letchumy"), "tirinur" (holy ash), "palli" (lizard).</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Names of Tamil People 	<p>"Letchumy", "Baskaran", "Mahadewi", "Meenakshi", "Ravindran".</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nicknames 	<p>"Maccan" (Brother-in-law), "Tambi" (Younger Brother), "Suduthanni" (Hot Water).</p>

• Kinship Terms	"periamma" (one's mother's elder sister), "periapppa" (one's father's elder brother).
• Mock Insults	"poda" (go away (for males)), "podi" (go away (for females)), "mayraindi" (a hairless fellow), "pandi" (pig).
• Sensitive Issues	"jati" (caste), skin tones such as "ma- niram" (not very dark) and "katha kari" (pitch dark).
• Processes	Tamil words such as "talikkiran" (saute) and "pannanum" (make/cook) are used in explaining a process.
• Question Words	"Ethana" (How many), "Appuram" (Then), "Enna" (What).

4.3.1.1 Names of Indian and Tamil Food

The participants of the 21-49 Year Age Group used Tamil words to mention names of Indian and Tamil food. They used Tamil words to mention names of Indian and Tamil food such as "idli" (a kind of Indian food), "tosai" (a kind of Indian food), and "rava" (a kind of Indian food). Traditional Tamil breakfasts' such as "idli", "tosai", and "rava" do not have any special equivalents in English. As thus, these food are mentioned in Tamil by the participants (See Also 4.4.5). This is as shown in Excerpt 22:

Excerpt 22:

M: Oh, that one my mother-in-law is drinking. She downan (do not want) to listen. Pestering my husband. The other brand all she say she get **vaittalai** (diarrhea). **Pasiyare** (Breakfast) nowadays she doesn't want. **Tosai potta, idli kepangae** (If I cook **tosai** she'll ask for **idli**). Then for sometimes, she wanted **rava** (a kind of food made from "sugi" flour). Now, **athu-m** (even that) stop. Every day milk lah. Now less complain. You're using "Every Day", isn't it?

Conversation 13

4.3.1.1.1 Vegetarian and Non-vegetarian Food

The Tamil word "**marakari**" in Excerpt 23 is specifically used to highlight the concept of vegetarianism in Hinduism.

Excerpt 23:

M: My father's birthday, my mother's birthday, my sister's birthday, **Varusha Purapu** (New Year), all **Letchumy Pooja** (Prayer for the Goddess "**Letchumy**") lah. We all had to eat **marakari** (vegetables)!

Conversation 9

This is because many Hindus are full time vegetarians, while others are vegetarians on Hindu auspicious days such as on Tuesdays and Fridays, and on other Hindu religious days. This explains why the word "**marakari**" is associated with auspicious days such as "**Letchumy Poojai**" (Prayer for the Goddess "**Letchumy**") and "**Varusha Purapu**" (New Year) in Excerpt 23. The Tamil word "**marakari**" in

Excerpt 23 conveys a much deeper religious sense in meaning as compared to the English words "vegetables" or even "vegetarian".

The Tamil word "**erachi**" is used instead of "meat" in Excerpt 24. Here again, the use of the Tamil word "**erachi**" shows a sharp contrast between a normal meat eating day of the participant, as compared to the day when she is a vegetarian. The meanings of "**erachi**" and "**marakari**" in Excerpts 23 and 24 are associated with the Tamil culture and religion for which there are no equivalents in English.

Excerpt 24:

M: Cannot eat cake, cannot eat **erachi** (meat). Nothing. The best part is when my father was 55. He planned to call a few friends and wanted to have *makan besar* (feast) - and my mother decided to invite the **Letchumy Dhayna Mandram** (Association for the Meditation of Goddess **Letchumy**)

Conversation 9

Excerpt 24 also shows the deep respect that Participant M's family has on "**Letchumy Dhayna Mandram**" (Association for the Meditation of Goddess **Letchumy**), which is an association that is active in performing religious prayers for the Goddess "**Letchumy**", and in the reciting of Hindu "**mantra**" (hymns) related to the Goddess. To show respect to "**Letchumy Dhayna Mandram**", Participant M's family in Excerpt 24, decided not to eat "**erachi**" (meat) on that particular day. In other words, they had to become "vegetarians" to show reverence and respect to the Goddess "**Letchumy**".

4.3.1.1.2 Ingredients in Indian and Tamil Traditional Dishes

Tamil words such as "**pallakottae**" (jackfruit seeds), "**manjal**" (saffron), "**paittanga**" (long beans), and other ingredients are found in the participants' conversations as in Excerpts 25 and 26:

Excerpt 25:

M: You all don't eat the **pallakottae** (jackfruit seeds) ah?

What you all do? How you all cook?

Conversation 11

Excerpt 26:

M: And then put some **manjal** (saffron) but not so much lah. Jus (Just) a little bit will do. For the colour and eh, taste.

Conversation 13

Many of the ingredients used in the cooking of Indian and Tamil food are mentioned in Tamil during the English conversations of the 21-49 Year Age Group of participants. For example, "**pallakottae**" or "jackfruit seed" is used in preparing a traditional Indian curry. This "**pallakottae kari**" or "jackfruit seed curry" is seldom prepared by the younger and modern Tamil generation. However, the participants used the Tamil word "**pallakottae**" when talking about the preparation of the dish, in their English conversation probably to stress the special connotation that "**pallakottae**" has on the Indian food culture.

The participants also mentioned other Tamil words, such as "**manjal**" (saffron), in their English conversations with their friends. "**Manjal**" is an auspicious item, which is used both in the preparation of Tamil dishes, and also in

Hindu religious functions. One of the participants who took part in the interviews conducted by the researcher said that **"manjal"** is believed to have healing properties by killing germs and that many Tamil females also use **"manjal"** for cosmetic purposes. **"Manjal"** is usually used by many Tamil ladies, particularly married ladies, as facial foundation and as facial wash. Many Tamils believe that the germ killing properties in **"manjal"** can prevent pimples and blackheads, and make the skin clear and supple. In fact, both the Tamil religion and culture place much importance in the use of **"manjal"** as a religious item in Hindu prayer, and in other socially important functions such as in Hindu marriages. Therefore, it is more natural for them to use Tamil terms in these occasions (See also 4.4.1.1.2).

4.3.1.2 Hindu Religious Ceremonies

The participants used Tamil terms related to the ceremonies performed in Hinduism, in Tamil. Excerpt 27 indicates the various Tamil terms related to the Hindu ceremony mentioned by the participants such as **"poojai"** (prayer), **"pu"** (flowers), **"maalai"** (garlands), and **"pusari"** (priest).

Excerpt 27:

B: How is the preparation for the **poojai** (prayer)?

S: Eh, everything is okay *lah* except for the **pu** (flowers) and **maalai** (garlands). The **pusari** (priest) in Klang temple, OK *lah*. Eh, not bad *lah*!

B: Mmm. **Athu nambe** (That one) **Letchumy** (name of a Tamil lady) can take care what?

L: No problem, **Pownemi Poojaiku pu ellam ennoda poruppu**. (I will prepare the flowers for the Full Moon Prayers.)

S: Thanks.

P: **Vanakkam** (Hello), how is the **Poojai** (Prayer)?

B: **Swamiji, neenga kastha -padathinga, naange irrukkom**. (Dear priest, don't worry, we are here.)

P: **Sari** (Okay), start **pannalama** ((shall we) start)?

Conversation 11

Excerpt 27 is taken from a long conversation held in a yoga-training hall, by a group of friends who were preparing for the "**Pownemi Poojai**" (Full Moon Prayer). When Participant L says "**Pownemi Poojaiku pu ellam ennoda poruppu**" (I will prepare the flowers for the Full Moon Prayers.), Participant S shows his gratitude by saying "Thanks" in English to Participant L. However, a person who has no knowledge about the Hindu culture and Hindu ceremonies, and way of life may not be able to make sense of the exact meaning of the conversation, even with the given translation. For example, the "**pu**" in the excerpt is "flower" in English. However, probably only a Hindu or a Tamil may know that the "**pu**"

implied in this context refers to a small, sweet scented flower with five petals called the "**malligai pu**" or "jasmine flower".

4.3.1.2.1 Hindu Religious Festivals

The participants also used Tamil words to mention Hindu festivals and items related to the Hindu religion and culture as shown in Excerpt 28. The participants used words like "**Ponggal**" (Hindu Harvest Festival), and "**ponngasoru**" (cooked sweetened rice) to their Tamil friends because of the Hindu religious, and cultural connotations indicated in these words.

Excerpt 28:

S: **Ponggal** is one thing *lah*. But other than that nothing special *lah*. Except for the **ponngasoru** (cooked sweetened rice)!

Conversation 15

However, this may not be the case if the Tamil person was speaking to a non-Tamil friend. The participants' non-Tamil friends will not understand the Tamil word "**ponngasoru**" (cooked sweetened rice). Hence, in that case, the Tamil friend is forced to translate "**ponngasoru**" into English or Bahasa Melayu. However, the English word "cooked sweetened rice" or the Bahasa Melayu equivalent "nasi manis" will not carry the religious connotation as "**ponngasoru**".

Besides "**Ponggal**", the participants also mentioned the Tamil word "**Deepavali**" (a Hindu festival) in their English conversation as shown in Excerpt 29:

Excerpt 29:

M: I had a eh, a friend from UK send me a **Deepavali** (a Hindu festival) card.

It's in my room - who's not having period - with all the **Letchumy**

(Goddess **Letchumy**) there.

Conversation 9

"**Deepavali**" is a popular festival of the Hindu Tamils in Malaysia, and is just as important as to them as "Christmas" is to the Christians, and "Hari Raya" to the Muslims. As thus, the Tamil word "**Deepavali**" carries much cultural and religious connotation to the Tamils. In fact, there is no specific word for "**Deepavali**" in English and this, together with the cultural and religious connotation of the word "**Deepavali**" explains why the participant used the Tamil word "**Deepavali**" in their English conversations.

The participants in the 21-49 Year Age Group also used Tamil words like "**poojai**" (prayer), "**pusari**" (priest), "**koil**" (temple) (Refer to Excerpt 24), and "**thevaram**" (hymns), and other words to their Tamil friends in their English conversations. This is as shown in Excerpt 30:

Excerpt 30:

B: I will read the **thevaram** (Hindu hymns) what! That one I won't miss!

Conversation 15

Words like "**poojai**" (prayer), "**pusari**" (priest), and "**koil**" (temple) are Tamil cultural and Hindu religious specific words. For example a "**poojai**" (prayer) specifically refers to a Hindu prayer and not to any other prayer. A "**poojai**" can only be performed by a Hindu "**pusari**" in a Hindu "**koil**". The translated words

"priest" and "temple" does not convey the exact connotation of the Tamil "**pusari**" and the Hindu "**koil**". This is because the word "priest" is too general, and it refers to person who may be performing any kind of prayer sessions in any religion. The word "temple" too, may refer to any place of worship, of many of the religions in this world. The participants used the Tamil terms "**poojai**", "**pusari**", and "**koil**" to convey the exact connotation of these words to their friends. Also, they all have shared meanings of these words because they belong to the same religious and ethnic group.

4.3.1.2.2 Hindu Gods and Goddesses

Tamil words such as "**Muniandi Sami**" (God "**Muniandi**"), "**Vidya Letchumy**" (Goddess "**Vidya Letchumy**") were found in the English conversations of the participants. This is as shown in Excerpt 31:

Excerpt 31:

M: Yes, **Santana Letchumy**, **Seetha Letchumy**, **Thairia Letchumy**,

Vidhya Letchumy ((Various forms of the Goddess "**Letchumy**")) all
lah.

R: She's special. She's **S. Letchumy**.

Conversation 9

The participants could not avoid using Tamil to mention names of Hindu Gods and Goddesses because there are no special terms in the English Language for the Hindu Gods and Goddesses.

4.3.1.2.3 Hindu Holy Words and Religious Taboo Words

The 21-49 Year Age Group also used Tamil words that are considered as holy and sacred, and also Tamil words which are considered as taboo in the Hindu religious sense, in their English conversations. This is as shown in Excerpt 32:

Excerpt 32:

B: I put **tirinur** (holy ash). I jus (just) came out of the temple eh =

C: = why, all, all right ah?

B: No *lah*, not quite eh, eh actually a **palli** (lizard) fell on my shoulder!

C: **Ada kadavule** (Oh God)! Better not get married to the girl *lah*. I mean =

B: = I think so also *lah*.

Conversation 15

The Tamil word "**tirinur**" refers to a kind of ash, which is considered sacred in Hinduism. As thus, the Hindu Malaysian Tamils of this study used the original Tamil word "**tirinur**" in their English conversation. In fact, the word "**tirinur**" by itself has a very sacred connotation and is usually mentioned in reverence, by the Tamil Hindu devotees.

The Tamil word "**palli**" (lizard) refers to a small, creeping, long-tailed, four-legged reptile and in itself is not a taboo word if used outside the Hindu religious context. However, the participants in Conversation 15, who were in a Hindu temple used the word "**palli**" in their English conversations with a different sense of meaning. In this case, "**palli**" is a taboo word that indicates bad-omen. This is in accordance to Palmer's view (1981:92) that:

Words even become taboo when the distasteful object is referred to by the word in a different sense.

The word "**palli**", as used by Participant B has a sense of change in meaning for it is used with a strong-feeling tone, which expresses fear and uncertainty. Participant B feels that since a "**palli**" fell on his shoulder it is an indication that he should not be married to the particular girl in discussion. The researcher found out later through the aid of the helper who recorded the particular conversation (Conversation 15) that the proposed marriage of Participant B was a traditional "match made" one. As thus, Participant B has the right to refuse the marriage proposal on the grounds that a "**palli**" fell on his shoulder while he was praying in the temple. However, this may not be the case if the marriage was based on mutual love between a girl and a boy. In fact, in the researcher's experience some Hindu marriages have taken place even if the horoscopes did not match.

Many orthodox Malaysian Tamils, especially the older generation also believe that if a "**palli**" is to make noise while they are praying, it is considered as an omen of warning or fulfillment of wishes, depending on the direction from which the noise comes. Thus, the Tamil word "**palli**" indicates a sense of taboo and grave warning if it is associated in Hindu religious situations.

Many orthodox Malaysian Tamils also consider "**palli**" as an omen of bad luck, and this is especially so if the "**palli**" falls on one's body parts, even if they are at home. It is considered very bad if the "**palli**" falls on one's head because it is believed that the person will be involved in an accident that can be deadly. The English word "lizard" does not convey the mentioned connotations of the Tamil word "**palli**", and this also explains why Participant B used the Tamil word "**palli**" in his English conversation with his friend.

4.3.1.3 Names of Tamil People

Names of people are also mentioned in Tamil. However, Malaysian Tamils particularly the traditional ones tend to name their children according to the names of their "**Istha Dewan**" or "**Dewathai**" (Favourite God or Goddesses) such as "**Letchumy**", "**Murugan**", "**Ganapathy**", "**Mahaletchumy**", "**Saratha**", and others. Traditional Tamils believe that by naming their children according to the Hindu Gods and Goddesses, "evil spirits" could be warded off. Another belief is that the person with the particular Hindu God or Goddess's name will be constantly reminded of the Gods, and others too will get the "**punyam**" (good deed) of mentioning the names of the Hindu Gods by calling their friends by name (Refer to Excerpt 31).

4.3.1.4 Nicknames

A sense of change in meanings are also present in the words that are used as nicknames by the participants in both the 10-20 Year and 21-49 Year Age Groups. For example, nicknames such as "**Maccan**" (Brother-in-law), "**Tambi**" (Younger Brother), and "**Suduthanni**" (Hot Water) are used in the participants English conversations. The original semantic meanings of "**maccan**", "**tambi**", and "**suduthanni**" are lost and there is a strong change of sense in the meanings. This can be seen in Excerpts 33, 34, and 35:

Excerpt 33:

R: Eh, **maccan** what's the time, ah?

Conversation 16

Excerpt 34:

H: **Tambi**, those days he was a runner! Now look at him!

Conversation 12

At this point, it is clear that certain Tamil words such as "**maccan**", and "**tambi**", which are used in the English conversations of the participant in this study, go beyond their actual semantic meanings. The word "**maccan**" actually means "brother-in-law" but in this context is used to address a close friend (See Also 4.2.1.1.6).

"**Tambi**" as used in Excerpt 34, is not the younger brother of Participant H, but is actually his friend. This is in line with Rosemary Khoo's (1992:109) view that words like "**tambi**" are kinship terms that are used as polite address and do not necessarily indicate blood relation. The use of "**tambi**" by Participant H also indicates that the mentioned "**tambi**" is younger than Participant H. Participant H may have also used "**tambi**" in order to imply that he is older than his friend, and as thus, he used the kinship word "**tambi**" (one's younger brother) as a nickname to his friend.

The use of the nicknames such as "**Maccan**", and "**Tambi**" also help the participants in establishing solidarity among their friends. This phenomenon implies that the relationship between the friends is as close as blood relation, even though they are not related. The word "**suduthanni**" means "hot water" but in Excerpt 35, is used as a Proper Noun to refer to a person.

Excerpt 35:

H: There's a letter. I am a guarantor for **Suduthanni's** brother.

Conversation 12

In Tamil, there is an idiom whereby a person who is impatient is referred to as "a person who has spilt hot water on his feet". Thus the "**Suduthanni**" mentioned in Excerpt 35 may be an impatient person in nature, and this might explain why Participant H called his friend "**Suduthanni**". In fact, later upon questioning, the participants in Conversation 12 said that it is common among the Tamils to use such nicknames among friends and even relatives.

4.3.1.5 Kinship Terms

Just like the 10-20 Year Age Group, the 20-49 Year Age Group also used Tamil words like "**periamma**" (one's mother's elder sister) and "**periappa**" (one's father's elder brother) in their English conversations. The participants used Tamil words because there are no English equivalents for these words and also because they are culture specific. This is as shown in Excerpt 36:

Excerpt 36:

B: Actually, my **periappa** (father's elder brother) called first and then only she went.

Conversation 13

The participants also used these Tamil lexical items because it is easier and faster to say the terms in Tamil, then to explain "**periamma**", and "**periappa**" in English (See Also 4.2.1.1.4).

The Tamil Language also has different sex markers for the lexical items that denote kinship terms as in the case of "**periappa**" (one's father's elder brother), and "**periamma**" (one's mother's elder sister) as shown in Excerpts 36, and 37:

Excerpt 37:

N: But my **anni** (sister-in-law) is another one, plus my **periamma**
(mother's elder sister). She also *masuk* (came in). *Penuh* (Full) *lah*.

Conversation 13

In fact, the tail word "**~ ma**" is used to refer to the female siblings of one's mother's side and "**~ pa**" is used to refer to the male sibling of one's father side. These features cannot be captured in English because they indicate the Tamil culture, and the Tamil way of organizing family relations.

4.3.1.6 Mock Insults and Vulgar Words

The participants in the 21-49 Year Age Group also used slightly crude terms to scold their friends. Examples are like "**poda**" (go away – for males) and "**podi**" (go away – for females). Excerpts 38, and 39 show the Tamil words "**poda**", (go away – for males) and "**podi**" (go away – for females) as used by the participants of this study. This is as shown in Excerpts 38 and 39:

Excerpt 38:

U: **Poda** (Go away (male)), I don't think it will come to that.

Conversation 16

Excerpt 39:

S: **Pona podi** (Go if you want to (female)), is not the end of the world.

Ave enna (Is she) ()

Conversation 16

"**Poda**" is a term that is considered not polite and is usually used when one is genuinely angry, or as an indication of mock insult and mock anger. Close friends and siblings in a family may use the terms, "**poda**" and "**podi**" amongst them. However, it would be greatly offensive to use the term "**poda**" and "**podi**" to older people including one's own parents. The participants in Excerpts 38 and 39 used the Tamil terms such as "**poda**" and "**podi**" as mock insults to their friends. The use of these mock insults words helped in enhancing the solidarity of the friends. As thus, the friends did not take it offensively and the entire issue was taken lightly, and later forgotten in the course of their conversations.

Other Malaysians such as the Malays and the Chinese sometimes use the term "**poda**" to indicate solidarity among friends. However, "**poda**" can also be used with the gesture of one's hand which means asking one "to get lost", and this connotation of "**Poda!**" (Get lost!) may have elements of anger, and even irritation, and hate.

The participants of this study used the Tamil word "**mayiru**" in at least two different connotations. The first connotation of "**mayiru**" is "hair on (your) head", and the second connotation of "**mayiru**" is "(your) pubic hair".

The "**mayiru**" used in Excerpt 40 indicate the "hair on your head" connotation, and is used as an act of solidarity, and can also be taken as a mock curse word, and to a certain extent, as a mock vulgar word.

Excerpt 40:

U: Eh, **mayiru** (hair), he didn't do anything jus (just) wait there only.

Conversation 16

However, in Excerpt 41 there is element of anger and frustration, and this is indicated by the use of the Tamil word "**mayiru**" together with the English word "shit".

Excerpt 41:

S: Shit, the **mayiru** ((pubic) hair) thinks ego, money can solve =

Conversation 16

Participant S uses the second connotation of "**mayiru**" ((your) pubic hair) to further stress his frustration on the person in discussion. However, the word "**mayiru**" ((your) pubic hair) was used to scold a third person, and was not directed to the friends in the group. In this way the solidarity of the friends was not jeopardized.

4.3.1.7 Caste

The term "**jati**" is specifically used to mention the caste system practiced among many of the Tamils in Malaysia. The participants used the Tamil word "**jati**" (caste) as shown in Excerpt 42:

Excerpt 42:

I: But I wouldn't want your **jati** (caste) guy *lah* – very money minded.

What is wrong - to fall in love? What if - low, low caste. Eh, **Meena** if you fall in love with a **pariah** (a caste) ah, **goundar** ah (a caste) ah you won't marry him ah? **Kallar** (a caste) ah?

M: I will *lah*.

I: I mean later if you find out.

M: Love what, of course *lah*.

Conversation 10

"**Jati**" or "caste" is usually not discussed openly among the Tamils because it is considered a very sensitive issue. Due to its sensitivity, the issue of "**jati**" is talked about in a hush-hush manner among many of the individual "**jati**" groups. This is because of the many connotations attached to the various "**jati**" found among the Malaysian Tamils. In fact, members of one "**jati**" view the members of another "**jati**" with much prejudice and suspicion so much so that many orthodox Tamil parents usually object to the marriage of their children, if their son or daughter fall in love with a boy or girl of a different "**jati**".

However, a particular group of friends in the 21-49 Year Age Group of this study did use the word "**jati**", and even mentioned the types of "**jati**" to their friends (Refer to Excerpt 42, Conversation 10). This is because all the participants in that particular group are close friends, and have known each other long enough to understand each other. A strong kind of kinship bondage was found in that group of friends who discussed the issue of "**jati**" even though they were of different "**jati**". The issue of "**jati**" is best expressed in Tamil because of the cultural connotation

attached to the word "jati" itself, and to the connotations attached to the different "jati" such as "Pariah", "Goundar", and "Kallar" (See also 5.1.3.3).

4.3.1.8 Skin Tones

The participants of the 21-49 Year Age Group also used Tamil words in their English conversations when talking about or referring to sensitive issues like a person's skin-colour. For example, the participants used Tamil words when discussing about a person's complexion that is, to say whether he or she is "dark-skinned" or "fair-skinned". The Tamil words "**ma-niram**" (not very dark), "**tairu**" (yogurt), and "**katha-kari**" (pitch dark) were used to describe the skin tones of two people, in Excerpts 43 and 44 below:

Excerpt 43:

I: My aunty is **ma-niram** (not very dark). Married. And the son is, you know
lah like the **ayah** (grandmother) is like charcoal.

S : **Katha-kari** (Really dark)=

((LAUGHTER))

I: The aunty I told you ah - now she said she got a **Malayalee** (an Indian
ethnic group) daughter-in-law =

M: = To compensate the son's colour.

((LAUGHTER))

Conversation 10

Note: It is a common belief among Malaysian Tamils that many of the Indians of the "**Malayalee**" ethnic group are "light complexioned".

Palmer (1981:72) feels that the physical features of colour and the cultural needs of a society determine the range of colour system used in the society. Thus, for the Malaysian Tamils of this study, they felt that the need to describe a "dark complexioned" person in a much more different and varied sense. The term "**ma-niram**" implies that the person in discussion "is dark but at the same time is also not very dark". When Participant I in Excerpt 44 uses the English simile "dark like charcoal" to describe her aunt's son's colour, Participant S stresses that he (the aunt's son) actually is "**katha-kari**" in colour. Here "**katha-kari**" actually carries a different shade of colour, as compared to the colour of charcoal. The shade of "**katha-kari**" as implied by Participant S, is darker than charcoal. It is "really dark", and in fact "**katha-kari**" carries a slightly derogatory nuance because the person in discussion is "darker than dark" (really dark).

The skin colour of a Tamil cannot simply be segregated between black and white. The range of skin colours in the Tamil culture is very wide and this explains the specific Tamil terms used by the participants to describe the numerous shades of skin tones of the Tamils. As far as the researcher could glean, the colour range of the Tamils in Malaysia might be anywhere between "**nalla sovuppu**" (very red (fair)) (See Conversation 10) to "**ma-niram**" and "**katha-kari**". The red (sovuppu) implied in "**nalla sovuppu**" here does not denote the traditional English red colour. The Tamils use "**nalla sovuppu**", to describe a person who is really "fair". The colour range of "**sovuppu**" (fair) itself may be numerous. The colours of "**ma-niram**", and "**katha-kari**" have their own range of shades as well. In fact, it is difficult even for a Tamil to describe the skin colour of a fellow Tamil without using culturally conditioned Tamil colour words because there is a strong preoccupation with skin colour among them.

Excerpt 44 gives us another shade of colour that is found in the participants' conversations. Participant S's idea of "lovely complexion" is the shade that emerge from of the combination of the colour of "**tairu**" (yogurt) and ripe lemon.

Excerpt 44:

S: They all have lovely complexion. Something like **tairu** (yogurt) and ripe lemon.

Conversation 10

As far as the researcher could deduce, the range of colours that emerge from the combination of "**tairu**" (yogurt) and ripe lemon may be anywhere between white to creamy yellow-green in shade.

However, the analysis of Excerpts 43 and 44 indicate that the participants have a positive connotation towards "lighter shades" of skin tones rather than "darker than dark" tones. But a "lovely complexion", according to Participant S in Excerpt 46, seems to be the colour shade between "**tairu**" (yogurt) and ripe lemon. Participant S used the Tamil word "**tairu**" and the English words "ripe lemon" to help define the "lovely complexion" that her relatives have. The word "**tairu**" may have been used because "**tairu**" is a popular food among the Tamils, and lemon (lime) is a citrus fruit that is considered religiously auspicious by the Hindus.

4.3.1.9 Processes

The most striking kind of code switching was found in the English conversations of the female participants of this study who were discussing the procedure of preparing traditional Indian and Tamil dishes. A strong sense of influence of the Tamil Language was found in the English conversations of these

participants. The Tamil word "**talikkiran**" (sauté) in Excerpt 45 is very typical to the Tamil way of cooking.

Excerpt 45:

M: First you must **talikkiran** (sauté) the onions and **appurom antha murunge kiraiye pothu** (then add the "**murungai**" leaves) cook **pannanum** ((you) must (cook)).

Conversation 13

This may be attributed to the fact that, the recipes mentioned by the participants may have been passed on from their ancestors who did not know English. However, the educated Tamil bilinguals and multilinguals of this study, managed to remember the recipes in the course of their English conversations by frequently asking their friends how the dishes could be prepared. The participants resorted to Tamil lexical items in the course of discussing the traditional recipes in English with their friends. Participant P in Excerpt 45, may have use the Tamil words probably to stress the Tamil way of "**talikkiran**" which is not the same as the English style of cooking because of the different kind of spices used in the process of "**talikkiran**".

In fact, the word "**talikkiran**" is derived from the Tamil root word "**tallipu**" (a mixture of spices used as ingredients in the process of "**talikkiran**" (sauté)). Thus, the Tamil word "**tallipu**" itself is linked to the word "**talikkiran**" and together, they emphasize the cultural connotation of the Tamil way to sauté the "**tallipu**" before cooking the "**murungai**" leaves.

4.3.1.10 Question Words

The participants also used Tamil question words such as "**Ethana?**" (How many?), "**Appuram?**" (Then?), and "**Enna?**" (What?) in the English conversations with their friends. This was probably done to get clarification of the issues in question. This is as shown in Excerpts 46 and 47:

Excerpt 46:

S: **Enna?** (What?) She wans (wants) me to go and *pɪjɪk* (persuade) her.

Conversation 16

Excerpt 47:

L: **Appuram** (Then?) **Appuram?** (Then?) I heard your mother is looking for a **ponnu** (bride) for your brother.

M: Seen already. After the month of **Adi** (the month of **Adi**) only going to fix the date.

Conversation 17

The question words were asked in Tamil probably because the issues that need clarification in Excerpts 46 and 47, are both "personal" in nature. For example, Participant L in Excerpt 47 repeats the Tamil question word "**Appuram?**" (Then?) twice before entering into the actual issue of finding out whether M's mother is really looking for a "**ponnu**" (bride) for M's brother. In fact, the Tamil word "**ponnu**" in Excerpt 47 has at least three different connotations attached to it. The Tamil word "**ponnu**" can mean "girl", "bride", or "gold". If the word "**ponnu**" is used in relation to arranged Hindu marriages then it can carry the connotation of a "girl who may become a bride". This is probably because most of the traditional arranged

Hindu marriages practise the "dowry" system in which the girl has to give a certain amount of gold to the boy who is willing to marry her.

Thus, because of the social, cultural, and monetary values attached to the connotation of "**ponnu**" (bride), "match makers" usually will not reveal the identity of the "**ponnu**" (girl who may become a bride) until the horoscopes of both the boy's and the "**ponnu's**" (girl who may become a bride) match, or until the engagement or the marriage date is fixed. This is done in order to protect the "**ponnu's**" (girl who may become a bride) identity from being damaged. This happens if the horoscope of the "**ponnu**" (girl who may become a bride) does not match with the boy's horoscope or if the "**ponnu's**" (girl who may become a bride) parents could not afford to pay the dowry. In the majority of cases, the marriage will usually be called off and the "**ponnu's**" (girl who may become a bride) parents will have to start circulating their daughter's horoscope again through a matchmaker, or through other relatives, and friends who are willing to find a partner for the girl.

If the girl's horoscope predicts some unfortunate or not so good luck, then the news is usually not talked or spread around to the other suitors who wish to marry the particular girl. This practise is a kind of social convention among the traditional Tamils who perform matchmaking marriages. Thus, this explains Participant L's hesitation in asking about the "**ponnu**" (bride) that M's mother is looking for her son. As a reply M answers in the positive, and mentions the month of "**Adi**" in Tamil.

The month of "**Adi**" is considered as an inauspicious month to even talk about marriages. However, Participant M, does not reveal anything about the "**ponnu**" (girl who may become a bride) and he makes a general positive statement: "Seen already. After the month of "**Adi**" (the month of **Adi**) only going to fix the

date." Participant M does not even mention the name of the "**ponnu**" (girl who may become a bride) because of the marriage social convention mentioned earlier.

Participant L knows that it is not polite to ask, but he attempts to question Participant M, though hesitantly, about the match making. This explains why Participant L, hesitated in the first place, by repeating the Tamil question word "**Appuram**" (Then).

4.3.2 Use of Tamil Expressions

The analysis of all the recorded conversations show that the 21-49 Year Age Group of participants of the study also used Tamil lexical items in the form of expressions in their English conversations. The Tamil expressions used in the English conversations of the 21-49 Year Age Group are as shown in Table 4.7:

Table 4.7: Use of Tamil Expressions in the 21-49 Year Age Group

• Expressions of Surprise	<p>Ada Kadavule (Oh my God), don't tell me the sangu (shell) is broken!</p> <p>Aiyo Kadavule (Oh my God), ellam pochu (everything is gone). Gone lah.</p>
• Description of People	<p>She's a sariyana nari lah (She's as cunning as a fox).</p> <p>Look at him vithai kamikkiran (he's showing off)!</p>
• Expressions of Hunger	<p>Sariyana pasivere (very hungry)!</p>

• Expressions of Farewell	So, see you, nalaikku pappom (see you tomorrow).
• Vulgar Expressions	Why should I, enna mayirukku (for what hair – used vulgarly), I should go?
• Comparison of Age	She dare cheat us, just a sinna pillae (small girl)!
• Teasing Friends	Kanmaniye, enge poringe? (Darling, where are you going?)

4.3.2.1 Expressions of Surprise

The participants expressed their emotions by using Tamil expressions such as "**Ada Kadavule!**" (Oh God!) in the midst of their English conversations with their friends. This is in line with Stern (1965: 183) view:

*Language is not a means of communication, it is quite as high a degree,
a means of expressing emotions*

Excerpts 48 and 49 show the expressions of surprise such as "**Ada Kadavule!**" which were used by the participants:

Excerpt 48:

M: **Ada Kadavule!** (Oh God!) Better not get married to the girl *lah*. I
mean...

Excerpt 49:

L: Ada Kadavule! (Oh God!) Don't tell me that the **sangu** (shell) is broken!

Conversation 17

"Kadavule" refers to the omnipotent God of Hinduism in general. In fact, an outsider who does not have any background knowledge to Hinduism will not be able to differentiate the concept and link between the many Hindu Gods and Goddesses, and the Creator, who is the one and only omnipotent God of Hinduism. When the friends use "Ada Kadavule" they are actually referring to the one and only omnipotent God of Hinduism, and not to their individual "Ishtha Devan / Dewi" (Favourite Gods and Goddesses) such as "Muniandi Sami" ("Muniandi" God), "Letchumy" (Letchumy Goddess), Murugan (Lord Murugan), and other Hindu Gods and Goddesses.

Thus, the Tamil solidarity is further enhanced by the use of "Ada Kadavule!" as a general way of expressing one's surprise, without involving their individual "Ishtha Devan / Dewi" (Favourite Gods and Goddesses). The religious connotation of the Tamil expression "Ada Kadavule!" is not lost because it still refers to the one and only omnipotent God of Hinduism. The nearest example that could be equated to this phenomenon is the Malay expression "Ya Allah!" (Oh God!). In this case, the God referred to is the one and only omnipotent God of Islam, which is "Allah". Just like "Kadavule", the nearest English translation of "Allah" which is "God" does not carry the exact connotation of "Allah". This is different from the use of the word "God" in the English exclamation "Oh my God" which has lost its religious connotation. The English expression "Oh my God" is generally used as an expression of surprise.

4.3.2.2 Description of People

The participants of the 21-49 Year Age Group also used Tamil expressions in their English conversations to comment on a person. For example, Participant G in Excerpt 50 used the Tamil lexical item "**nari**" (fox) to describe a person who is cunning.

Excerpt 50:

G: She's a eh, sariyana nari ((as cunning) as a fox) *lah*.

Conversation 13

The Tamil expression "**sariyana nari**" may be linked to the English simile "as cunning as a fox". The participant G might have subconsciously translated "as cunning as a fox" in the course of his conversation with his friends to create a stronger negative impact about the woman in discussion. Thus, the Tamil expression "**sariyana nari**" has a negative connotation that is meant to lower the reputation, and to degrade the woman.

The participants also used Tamil expressions to describe their children's activities and pranks in the midst of their English conversations with their friends as shown in Excerpt 51:

Excerpt 51:

M: Look at him, vitthai kamikkiran ((he's) showing off)!

B: Yeah lah, nowadays children are all like that, what?

Conversation 14

The Tamil expression "**vitthai kamikkiran**" implies that the child in discussion is actually a mischievous male, and this is implied in the word "**kamikkiran**" ("**~ran**" is used to indicate a male).

However, a careful observer will notice that the Tamil expression "**vitthai kamikkiran**" can be viewed at two levels. Firstly, the Tamil words "**vitthai**" and "**kamikkiran**" have an institutionalized lexical relation whereby "**vitthai**" (magic) has to be "shown" (**kamikkiran**) to somebody. At this level, the connotation of "magic" can be taken as an act that is pleasing and "magical" to the viewer's eyes. The second connotation of "**vitthai kamikkiran**" can be associated to the pranks of the child in discussion.

Participant M associates her child's pranks to the first meaning of "**vitthai**" (the art of magic). The child in discussion is Participant M's first and only child, and M is actually very proud in saying that her child is showing "**vitthai**". The direct translation of "**vitthai**", is "magic". Thus, whatever pranks M's child is playing seems to be like magic to M and hence she says: "Look at him, **vitthai kamikkiran**."

However, M's friend takes the implied meaning of "**vitthai kamikkiran**" (he's showing off/naughty). Participant B in Excerpt 51 actually views M's child as naughty but she does not say it directly to Participant M. Instead, Participant B makes a general statement cum question by saying: "Yeah lah, nowadays children are all like that, what?". The researcher clarified this with Participant B after the recording of the conversation. Participant B informed the researcher that Participant M is pampering her child because he is the only child in Participant M's family.

4.3.2.3 Expressions of Hunger

The participants in this study expressed hunger by using Tamil expressions such as the one shown in Excerpt 52. This may probably due to the fact that food is culturally associated with a race and thus, hunger is expressed in Tamil to associate with the cultural connotation of food (See also 5.1.3.9).

Excerpt 52:

B: Start pannuvama? (Shall we start?)

M: Sariyana pasivere. (Very hungry.)

Conversation 12

4.3.2.4 Expressions of Farewell

Just like the other two age groups, the participants of the 21-49 Year Age Group also used Tamil expression to take leave as shown in Excerpt 53.

Excerpt 53:

D: So, see you, nalaikku pappom (see you tomorrow).

Conversation 13

The Tamil culture does not encourage a person to just say "Good bye" for it is more polite to say "I will see you later" or "See you again". Furthermore, "Good bye" sounds like "a final departure", and this notion carries a negative connotation to the Tamils because it sounds as if that person is going forever, and is never going to come back again (See Also 4.2.2.7 and 4.4.12.1). Thus, this explains why the Tamil expression "nalaikku pappom" (see you tomorrow) was used by Participant D in Excerpt 53.

4.3.2.5 Vulgar Expressions

The participants also used Tamil expressions such as "**enna mayiruku**" and "**mayirandi**" to curse, and as vulgar expressions. Tamil expressions were used probably to intensify the hate that Participant S has towards the person in discussion.

This is as shown in Excerpt 54:

Excerpt 54:

S: **Enna?** (What?) She wan (wants) me to go and *pujuk* (persuade) her. Eh, come on *lah*, **enna mayiruku** (for what hair) **enna mayiruku** (for what hair) I must go and do it? You know what she said, "Go *lah*, you **mayirandi** (hairless fellow – (used vulgarly)), **illana na poi sayyiren** (if not I will go and do) and don't come begging afterwards"- **ne sonna** (she said).

Conversation 16

Some of the conversations of the participants such as in Excerpt 54, displayed an aggressive yet witty tone because the participants are in the domain of friendship. The Tamil expression "**enna mayirukku**" (for what hair) as used by the participants in this age group show traces of vulgarity as implied by the Tamil word "**mayiru**" (hair). This is because if "**enna mayirukku**" if translated literally means "for what hair" which probably refers to the hair on one's head. However, the other connotation of "**enna mayirukku**" goes beyond the literal translation because it refers to "the hair on one's private part". Explicitly, the Tamil expression "**enna mayirukku**" in Excerpt 54 is used to express anger and irritation. However, the implied meaning of "**enna mayirukku**" has a vulgar connotation attached to it (See Also 4.2.1.1.5).

Participant S in Excerpt 54 is offended, and his male ego is challenged because a woman had used the Tamil word "**mayirandi**" to him. This is because "**mayirandi**" has a vulgar connotation, even though the direct meaning of "**mayirandi**" is "hairless fellow". The term "**mayirandi**" is a compound of "**mayiru**"(hair) and "**andi**" (beggar), and has an insulting connotation because it degrades Participant S by implying that "he is gutless like an impotent man". And because of this Participant S is insulted and angry, and he uses the crude term "**sonna**" (she said) to mention the woman's words to his friend.

The Tamil culture, just like many other Asian cultures, expects a woman to be polite in her speech, and in expressing herself. Thus, there were no vulgar Tamil words or expressions uttered directly by the female participants of this age group. However, no concrete conclusions can be made from this finding, because the female participants of this age group may have purposely refrained from using such words, knowing that their conversations were being taped (See Also 4.2.21).

4.3.2.6 Comparison of Age

The participants in this age group also used Tamil collocations such as "**sinna pillae**" in their conversations as shown in Excerpt 55. The anger shown by Participant C in Excerpt 55 is justified when she complains about a young girl, who cheated on her by comparing the girl's age, by saying: "She dare cheat us, just a **sinna pillae** (small girl)!"

Excerpt 55:

C: She dare cheat us, just a sinna pillae (small girl)!

L: Yes ah **ma** ((an honorific term))? Are you sure?

C: I jus (just) hate it *lah*. **Yen vaye mudikittu iruntha ave?** (Why did she keep her mouth shut?) Cannot open the mouth ah? Fed up *lah*. This people.

L: Let go *lah*. ((SILENCE)) **Appuram?** (Then?)

Conversation 17

The Tamil culture, as in other Asian cultures, places much importance in the respect given by younger people to their elders. Special honorific terms are used to address friends and relatives who are older (Also see 4.4.2 and 4.4.3). Hence, every child is expected to respect his or her elders in the family and also other fellow Tamils who are elder to him or her. This explains the anger shown by Participant C towards the young girl in discussion because the girl had cheated on Participant C even though Participant C is elder to her.

4.3.2.7 Teasing Friends

The participants also code switched to interesting expressions such as "Kanmaniye, enge poyirunthinge?" (Darling/the shine/"pupil" of my eye, where have you been?) in their English conversations as in Excerpt 56. Excerpt 56 is interesting because Participant S has used the combination of the Tamil idiom "Kanmaniye" and the Tamil expression "enge poyirunthinge" in his English conversation with his friends.

Excerpt 56:

S: "**Kanmaniye**, enge poyirunthinge?" (Darling/the shine/"pupil" of my eye, where have you been?)

Conversation 16

In the case of Excerpt 56, the Tamil idiom "**Kanmaniye**" was used to seek attention and also as a playful way of greeting a friend. In fact, "**Kanmaniye**" is also the compound of the Tamil words "**kan**" (eyes) and "**mani**" (shine/"pupil" of my eye) can be equated to the English idiom "the apple of my eye". The term "**Kanmaniye**" can also be taken as an expression of affection that can be equated to the English word "Darling". The Tamil expression "**enge poyirunthinge**" has an institutionalized lexical relation because it is a common expression used among the Tamils to address a long lost friend. Thus, "**Kanmaniye, enge poyirunthinge**" is a Tamil culture specific expression, and its connotation is difficult to express in English by simply translating it.

4.3.3 Conclusion

Similar to the 10-20 Year Age Group, the participants of the 21-49 Year Age Group also used Tamil words and expressions in the form of collocations in their English conversation with their friends. The participants of this age group used Tamil lexical items in order to mention specific words and meanings that were not found in English. The participants also used Tamil lexical items, amongst others, to enhance the solidarity among their friends. The next section will discuss in detail the use of Tamil lexical items in the 50 ≥ Year Age Group.

4.4 Use of Tamil Lexical Items in the 50 ≥ Year Age Group

This section discusses the Tamil lexical items used in the English conversations of the 50 ≥ Year Age Group. Excerpts from the recorded conversations will be used to substantiate the results of the findings. The Tamil lexical items in this age group are used for various reasons as shown in Table 4.8:

Table 4.8: Use of Tamil Words in the 50 ≥ Year Age Group

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hindu Religious, Traditional, and Cultural Words 	<p>"Navarathiri", "Thiru Kalyanam", "Kantha – Shashthi" (Names of Hindu Festivals), "Murugan" temple, "Vinayagar" temple, (names of Hindu temples), "kavadi" (Hindu chariot), "pu" (flower), "manjal" (saffron), "poojai" (prayer), "punyam" (good deed).</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kinship Terms 	<p>"appa" (father), "amma" (mother), "pathi" (grandmother), "periappa" one's father's elder brother).</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Greetings and Honorific Terms 	<p>"Vanakkam" (Hello), "Vange-ma" (Welcome ladies), "Vange" (to invite a visitor).</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Indian Musical Instruments 	<p>"Nathasvaram", "Mrithangam" (names of Indian musical instruments).</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Numbers 	<p>"poojiam" (zero), "anju" (five), "ompathu" (nine).</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Indian and Tamil Food 	<p>"Payasam" (Indian sweet porridge),</p>

	"urugaai" (pickles), "saambar" (dhal curry), "tosai" (a kind of Indian snack), "takkali" (tomatoes).
• Colours	"karuppu" (black).
• Nicknames	"Karuvalu" (Salted fish)
• Question Words	"Enge" (Where), "Enna" (What), "Appurom" (Then), "Ethana" (How many).
• Names of Tamil People	"Ramesh", "Om Namasivaya", "Rathakrishnan", "Balaraman", "Mariamma".
• Animals	"naai" (dog), "koli" (chicken).

4.4.1 Hindu Religious, Traditional, and Cultural Words

As in the other age groups of this study, the participants of the 50 ≥ Year Age Group also used Tamil words that are related to Hinduism, Hindu Temples and Hindu Festivals, and the Hindu way of life in their English conversations. These words are said in Tamil because there are no English equivalents for these terms.

4.4.1.1 Hindu Temples and Festivals

The participants code switched to Tamil words, in order to mention names of Hindu festivals such as "Thiru – Kalyanam" (a Hindu religious function), and Hindu temples such as "Murugan" temple. This kind of code switching, according to Gumperz (1972) is called "situational switching" whereby a bilingual switches

languages in order to fill in the lexical gap of between languages. This is as shown in

Excerpt 57:

Excerpt 57:

R: Monday was **Thiru – Kalyanam** (a Hindu religious function).

But only **kavadi** (chariot) in **Murugan** Temple. The procession, all temples can. A **kavadi** should be followed, eh, what you call, followed very strictly.

Conversation 19

"**Thiru – Kalyanam**" is a Hindu religious function celebrated by the devotees of Lord "**Murugan**" (a Hindu God) in the "**Murugan**" temples. It is difficult to give translated words for "**Thiru – Kalyanam**" and "**Murugan**" because of their religious, and cultural connotations. This explains why the participants did not attempt to translate these words knowing that this will create confusion and thus altering their religious and cultural meaning.

4.4.1.2 Hindu Religious Terms

The participants also used Tamil words such as "**poojai**" (prayer), "**saivam**" (vegetarian), and "**punyam**" (good deed) in their English conversations. This is because words like "**poojai**", "**punyam**", and "**saivam**" carry religious connotations, and it is difficult to give the exact meaning of the words in English. In fact, both Participant R and Participant D used Tamil lexical items such as "**karma**" and "**punyam**" as a discourse strategy to accommodate and collaborate with each other (See Lee Wei, 1995). Participant R mentions the word "**karma**" to Participant D because he knows that Participant D is also a Hindu and thus, understands the

connotation of "**karma**". Participant D replies by using the Tamil word "**punyam**" because he too, knows that his friend is a Hindu and understands the connotation of "**punyam**". Thus, in order to make their conversation smooth and also to express better meanings, both the participants in Excerpt 58 code switched to Tamil during their English conversation. This is as shown in Excerpt 58:

Excerpt 58:

R: They used only the **karma** (Hinduism law of cause and effect) rule.

D: It's **punyam** (good deed) if you help the *cacat* (handicapped) people.

R: Banting **Murugan** Temple, our temple - morning I went *lah* - six days - For **Navarathiri** (A Hindu religious function).

Conversation 19

The word "**punyam**" in Excerpt 58 carries much religious connotation because for a Hindu, his entire spiritual life cycle is supposed to be conditioned by a series of "**karma**" that he gathers in the course of his life. If he performs much good "**karma**" then he will be awarded with much "**punyam**" (good deed). Participant D in Excerpt 58 used the Tamil word "**punyam**" because of its religious and culture specific connotations.

Just like the 21-49 Year Age Group, the participants in this age group also used Tamil words such as "**poojai**" (prayer), "**pu**" (flowers), "**maalai**" (garland), and "**manjal**" (saffron) in their English conversations. This is as shown in Excerpt 59:

Excerpt 59:

S: For the **poojai** (prayer) all, everything must be clean

- **Pu** (flowers), **maalai** (garland), **manjal** (saffron) everything.

Conversation 22

The word "**poojai**" (prayer) in Excerpt 59 used by the participants implies that the Hindu prayer that is in discussion, will be carried out in a Hindu temple, by a Hindu "**pusari**" (priest) or "**Swami**" (High Priest). The connotation of the Tamil word "**poojai**", would be lost if the participants use the English word "prayer". This is because "**poojai**" is a Tamil religious, and Tamil culture specific word referring to the Hindu way of conducting prayers (See Also 4.3.1.2.1).

The word "**manjal**" (saffron) found in Excerpt 59 is actually a yellowish-orange powder derived from a kind of tuber, and is considered an auspicious item which is used in Hindu prayers (See Also 4.3.1.1.2). The implied meaning of the Tamil word "**pu**" refers to the "jasmine flower", and to not any other flower. This is because the jasmine flower is highly regarded as an auspicious flower in Hinduism. The word "**maalai**" does not refer to the common "garlands" that we find in florist shops. The Tamil "**maalai**" refers specifically to the garland made from the "jasmine flowers" which are used in Hindu temples, and in Hindu prayers.

Besides in Hindu prayers, "**pu**" (flowers), "**maalai**" (garland), and "**manjal**" (saffron) are also very important items in Hindu weddings. Thus, these items have very rich cultural connotations attached to them. For example, it is a must for a Hindu bride to adorn herself with "**pu**"(flowers), "**maalai**"(garland), and "**manjal**" (saffron) during her wedding rites. This indicates the close link between the Hindu prayers and the Hindu weddings.

In addition, the Tamil words "**pu**" (flowers), "**maalai**" (garland), and "**manjal**" (saffron) are also used in Hindu funerals. The Tamil word "**pu**" (flowers) is mentioned in Excerpt 60:

Excerpt 60:

S: Today's **pu** (flowers) all, I'm giving it there *lah*. No need to charge all.

Punyam tha-na? (It's a good deed (isn't it?)) **Avaroda periappa** (His father's elder brother) is doing everything. Crying *lah!* **Sari Vange!**

(Come (let's go)!)

Conversation 23

The "**pu**" mentioned in Excerpt 60 refers to the "jasmine flowers", and usually the "**maalai**" used in performing the funeral rites will be made of "jasmine flowers". If a married woman whose husband is still alive dies, "**manjal**" will be used together with the "**pu**", and "**maalai**" when performing the funeral rites.

Another interesting traditional Tamil cultural act that is still practised by many of the Malaysian Tamils, is a Tamil widow is denied the privilege to adorn herself with "**pu**", and "**maalai**", and also denied the use of "**manjal**" for cosmetic purposes after her husband's death. In this situation, the Tamil words "**pu**" "**maalai**", and "**manjal**" carry a very different connotation as compared to the "**pu**", "**maalai**", and "**manjal**" used in the Hindu prayer. For a Hindu woman, "**pu**", "**maalai**", and "**manjal**" are cosmetic items that carries the cultural connotation that give her the identity of a respected married lady. For a Hindu widow, "**pu**", "**maalai**", and "**manjal**" carry the connotation of auspicious items that are denied to her, for various reasons which subjugate her in the Hindu social hierarchy.

The "pu", "maalai", and "manjal" used in the Hindu prayers carry the connotation of things which are related to nature, abundance, cleanliness and also as religiously auspicious items. Thus, the religious and cultural connotation of "pu", "maalai", and "manjal" vary according to the functions in which they are used. These meanings cannot be expressed in English, and this explains why the participants of this age group used the Tamil words "pu", "maalai", and "manjal" in their English conversations with their friends. Further, the analysis of the use of these words also help us to understand the way the participants of this study view the world, and how the Tamil culture has "shaped" the mental make up of the participants.

4.4.2 Kinship Terms

Similar to the other two age groups, the participants in the 50 ≥ Year Age Group also used Tamil kinship terms in their English conversations. For example, family terms such as "periappa" (one's father's elder brother) are used by the participants of the 50 ≥ Year Age group (See Also 4.2.1.1.4 and 4.3.1.5). The participants also used words such as "amma" (mother), "appa" (father); and "pathi" (grandmother) to their friends. This can be seen in Excerpt 61:

Excerpt 61:

C: Come-ya (ya – Honorific term used to a person younger to oneself),
Come to pathi (grandmother). He's a quiet boy *lah*.

Conversation 21

The participants used family terms such as "periappa" (one's father's elder brother), just like the 10-20 Year Age Group (See Also 4.2.1.1.4). This is because

the Tamil word "**periappa**" does not have the exact equivalent in English. The English equivalent of "**periappa**" can roughly be equated to "uncle". However, the English "uncle" does not carry the Tamil cultural meaning of "**periappa**". Other Tamil words like "**amma**" (mother), "**appa**" (father), and "**pathi**" (grandmother) were used even though there are English equivalents for these terms. This may be due to the Tamil cultural connotations present in these words. For example, "**amma**" is Tamil for "mother" and the participants used "**amma**" in their English conversations with their friends. "**Amma**" specifically refers to a Tamil woman who is also a mother. Thus, by using "**amma**" a kind of implicit Tamil cultural bondage is created. Hence, the participants share this cultural bondage as a way of implying that the "**amma**" they are referring to, is not just another "mother" but she is a Tamil woman who is also a mother of Tamil children.

Some traditional Tamils also view that Tamil children who do not call their mother "**amma**" as children who are not well brought up in the Tamil way of life. (Refer to Interview 4). Thus, this shows that the Tamil "**amma**" is a loaded word in terms of its meaning and has cultural connotations attached to it.

Excerpt 62:

M: She eh, **avunge** ((an honorific term)), she wants to prepare the print.

L: Yes, ah **ma**? Are you sure?

Conversation 18

In fact, the participants, particularly the ones in the 21-49 Year Age Group, and in the 50 ≥ Year Age Group used the honorific term "**~ma**" which is actually a shortened version of "**amma**" to address a Tamil female. The term "**~ma**" as shown

in Excerpt 62 is also used as an endearment term to someone who is younger than oneself.

4.4.3 Greetings and Honorific Terms

The participants of the $50 \geq$ Year Age Group welcomed their friends by using Tamil words such as "**Vanakkam**" which is actually the Tamil way of saying "Hello", and to acknowledge a fellow Tamil. The Tamil word "**Vannakkam**" is a form of greeting which is usually used among the Tamils in Malaysia. In fact, the correct way of saying "**Vanakkam**" is by uttering the word "**Vanakkam**", and at the same time both the hands of the person who is involved in the greeting, should be clasped together. This way of "**Vanakkam**" saying is similar to the Hindu way of praying. This way of greeting is different from the Western "Hello" which is usually followed by a handshake. Thus, the Tamil cultural connotation of "**Vanakkam**" is different from the English "Hello", and this explains why the participants of this age group used "**Vanakkam**" in their English conversations with their friends.

However, the other two age groups of this study did not use "**Vanakkam**" in their English conversations. Instead they used popular English terms like "Hello" and "Hi" to welcome their friends. This may be due to the Western influence among the younger generation of Malaysian Tamils. Other Malaysians such as the Malays and the Chinese also tend to use English terms like "Hello" and "Hi" to their friends.

In the case of Excerpt 63, Participant M is a man and the visitors he is welcoming are Tamil ladies. Traditionally, the Tamil culture does not encourage a male to shake hands with a female, and this is especially so, if she is a married lady. The notion here is that it is not polite to have any kind of body contact with a female even though she may be a good friend. Thus, this might explain why Participant M

in Excerpt 63 welcomed his lady friends by using the Tamil word **"Vanakkam~ma"**:

Excerpt 63:

M: **Vanakkam-ma, ullukku vange!** (Hello ladies, come inside!) Please sit down.

I'll call her.

Conversation 23

In fact, when Participant M in Excerpt 63 says **"Vanakkam-ma"**, he is implying that he is actually greeting a fellow Tamil with presumably the same culture, and by saying **"Vanakkam~ma"** to his friend, he subconsciously establishes a feeling of Tamil comradeship with his friends. The use of the honorific term **"~ma"** indicates that participant M's friend are ladies and with this, the use of **"Vanakkam~ma"** actually helps create a strong sense of respect, solidarity and shared identity between participant M, and his lady friends.

Also, many Tamils particularly the older generation orthodox males, do not call ladies by name because the Tamil culture deems that as impolite. As a substitute, honorific terms such as **"~ma"**, and **"~nge"** are used instead. The participants of this age group also used honorific terms such as **"avunge"**, and **"~ma"** in Tamil because these terms are not found in the English Language. This way of greeting may be different if the friends were all males as shown in Excerpt 64:

Excerpt 64:

M: **Vanakkam** (Hello), Mister Vela. We were all waiting for you at the tree.

V: And I thought at the entrance, that side.

Conversation 21

Participant M in Excerpt 64 is a male and he greets his male friend by using "**Vanakkam**" without any Tamil honorific term. However, he calls his friend by name, and this is an indication of solidarity among the Tamil male friends in the particular group. In fact, the use of honorific terms can be considered as a requirement or social convention among the Tamils in Malaysia. Generally, a Tamil who follows the Tamil social convention will use honorific terms spontaneously and appropriately, according to the context or situation in which he or she is functioning.

However, the participants of this study (apart from the $50 \geq$ Year Age Group) also used crude terms such as "**Dei**" (Hey) to address their friends and no offence was taken. This is because the participants are in the domain of friendship and as thus, they are in their "peer groups". However, if "**Dei**" (Hey) is uttered outside the domain of friendship, say for example in addressing a stranger, then the stranger will be greatly insulted. If "**Dei**" (Hey) is used by a group of friends in the domain of friendship then it is usually considered as an indication of close attachment and solidarity.

Therefore it is difficult to generalize, at least in the domain of friendship, that a person who uses crude terms as rude and aggressive, and a person who uses honorific terms such as "**~ma**", "**~nge**" etc. as a "polished" and well mannered person. There are times when these honorific terms are used to tease, and even to

insult and abuse people. Sometimes, there may even be conversations that are full of crude as well as honorific Tamil terms, which may end up into mock arguments. What may sound as a curse or indecent speech may actually be a way of exchanging daily gossip among the friends.

4.4.4 Indian Musical Instruments

Indian musical instruments such as "**Nathaswaram**" and "**Mrithangam**" are mentioned in Tamil because there are no English equivalents for these terms as they are specific Indian and Tamil musical instruments. This is as shown in Excerpt 65:

Excerpt 65:

D: Like in Klang – they had a very good eh, eh they used only

Nathaswaram and **Mrithangam** (Indian musical instruments).

Conversation 19

The appreciation of music may be universal, but every culture has its own instruments and ways of making music. For the Tamils in Malaysia, "**Nathaswaram**" and "**Mrithangam**" are two musical instruments that are used in the performance of Indian Classical Music, and in other religious functions. Indian Classical Music is often performed in temples, and in other social functions such as at Hindu weddings.

4.4.5 Traditional Tamil and Indian Food

Just like the 21-49 Year Age Group, the participants of the 50 ≥ Year Age Group also mentioned names of traditional Tamil and Indian food such as "**tosai**", "**idli**", "**saambar**", "**payasam**", and "**urugaai**" in Tamil. Some of these food like

"payasam" are related to the Tamil religion and culture. This is as shown in Excerpt 66:

Excerpt 66:

L: This whole month, full of weddings. Yesterday went to **Ramalingam's** son's **pasrusam** (engagement). A lot of people. **Idli** (a kind of snack), **tosai** (a kind of snack). Evening what?

T: Jus (Just) put a little bit more *lah*. Enough **saambar** (dhall curry). Okay, okay!

Conversation 23

"**Tosai**" is a popular food not only among the Tamils in Malaysia, but also among other Malaysians like the Malays and Chinese. "**Saambar**" is actually "dhall curry" in English. Somehow, "dhall curry" does not have the exact "aroma" of the Tamil cuisine "**saambar**".

The Tamil word "**payasam**" has a distinct religious connotation. This is because "**payasam**" or "sweet porridge" is usually prepared in temples or homes, to mark or when celebrating festivals such as "**Deepavali**", "**Ponggal**", and on Tuesdays and Fridays. The Hindus consider Tuesdays and Fridays as religiously auspicious days. As thus, a pious Hindu Tamil usually prepares "**payasam**" to be offered to the deities on Tuesdays and Fridays. Later, after the prayer the "**payasam**" will be eaten by the family members and friends, and also will be shared by other devotees if the "**payasam**" is prepared in a temple.

Thus, it would be absurd and even offensive to a Tamil if "sweet porridge" is used to mention "**payasam**". This is especially so, if the Tamil is a Hindu, for a Hindu is expected to respect the offering made to the Gods. Besides "**payasam**",

"pongasoru" (cooked sweetened rice) is another religious offering that was mentioned in Tamil by the participants. The word "pongasoru" too has the same connotation as "payasam" (See also 4.3.1.2.1).

4.4.6 Numbers

The Tamil culture places much importance in numbers and as thus, many Malaysian Tamils believe in the art of numerology. In fact, numbers play a very big role in the life of most of the Hindus (and even other Indians) throughout Malaysia. Jagjit (cited in Cheiro, 1987:9) describes the Hindu art of numerology as the "science of numbers". The participants in Excerpt 67 mentioned numbers in Tamil. In fact, when Participant O mentioned "kosen" (kosong) which is zero in Bahasa Melayu, assuming it as a Tamil word, Participant L corrects him saying that the correct Sanskrit word for "zero", which is "cyber" to his friend. Participant L also adds in the Tamil word "poojiam" which is equivalent to "zero" in English, to his friends. Participant L's description about the origin of the English term "Cyber space" is interesting because he links "cyber" (zero) to "Cyber Space" which he defines as "Zero Space". This indicates the scientific notion that the participants have on the use of numbers. This is in line with Cheiro's (1987:17) explanation on the symbolic value of "zero". According to him, Hindu numerology views "zero" as a "symbol of endlessness or eternity". Jagjit also agrees to Cheiro's view, and mentions that "zero and "one" are used in the computer language in modern times.

Many Malaysian Tamils too believe that numbers can change the luck of people. In fact, the Tamil horoscope itself is based on the nine planets in the galaxy. A person's "good" or "bad" luck is calculated according to the movement of the planets. For example, Participant O in Excerpt 67 suddenly asks a question about a friend's

son who had met with an accident while they were talking about numbers. This indicates the implied cultural connotation of numbers being "good" and "bad". Later, upon questioning, Participant O said that he had remembered his friend's son's "bad time" while discussing about numbers because the friend's son was involved in an accident earlier on. Later on, the participants in Excerpt 67 continue talking about other occult things such as "good" and "bad" luck, "mother's curses" and about "God's words" (See Conversation 24). These aspects clearly indicate the importance of the art of numerology, and the concept of "good" and "bad" time in the Hindu way of life. This is as shown in Excerpt 67:

Excerpt 67:

N: So, she's coming to the Lucky Draw or not?

M: What, what is your number?

O: **Ompathu** (Nine), **Anju** (Five), **Koson** (Zero), **Anju** (Five).

L: ((LAUGHTER)) **Cyber** (Zero), - **Poojiam** (Zero)

M: The numbers lah. They'll tell in Sanskrit. Lucky Draw.

L: **Cyber** also. Sanskrit - that's why from there only they got **Cyber** space, Zero space. *BETUL! (RIGHT!)* Sanskrit word, **cyber** (zero).

O: Why they want to put Zero space?

L: () it's starting with zero and one only isn't it? Your binary - computer language starting with one and zero Computers don't know what you are talking about. Like that only they live. Eight character -

O: Eh, that **Gobi** fellow. His son met with an accident at Sri Langat lah.

The ancient art of astrology and numerology still play a vital part in the life of the majority of Malaysian Tamils. When a child is born into a Hindu Tamil family, the elders in the family usually consult astrologers to prepare a horoscope chart, and name the child according to the time and day of its birth. Many Hindu parents even go to the extent of safeguarding their child from "evil" and "bad" luck, by ensuring that the letters in the name add up to the lucky number of the child. This is because in the Tamil art of numerology, each alphabet or letter has a corresponding numeric value. Many Malaysian Tamils believe that the time and date of birth of a child determines the kind of life the child will lead. In order to ensure a good life for their child, the parents will try to pick names in which the numbers add up to the child's date and time of birth. In fact, Cheiro (1987: 15) explains that every number has an occult or hidden meaning in their relation to human life.

Other ritual events such as prayers and death are based on this concept of "good" and "bad" time, and date. Most of the 50 ≥ Year Age Group of participants of this study were especially particular about the numbers on which a birth, death or other occasions fall. For example, Participant S in Excerpt 68 implies that the person in discussion, died a "timely death" because "The **"teangai"** (coconut) broke perfect". This is because the **"taengai"** (coconut) in the Hindu funeral rites, is used as a medium to indicate the "time" of the person's death.

Excerpt 68:

S: Think they catered . I didn't go. Velu went. Fixed everything. Rice and **saambar** (dhall curry). Enough what? Everybody hungry. We must feed the children. The **teangai** (coconut) broke perfect, it seems.

Conversation 23

If the funeral "**teangai**" breaks in equal halves, then the dead person is said to have died a timely death, and it is believed that the person's soul will get peace and rest. However, if the funeral "**teangai**" gets shattered or breaks in uneven halves, then it is believed that the person had died before his "time" and that his soul will not be at peace. It is also a common belief among many of the Tamils that if a person were to die before his or her "time" his soul will be lingering around his loved ones, and may cause them to fall sick, and may even cause them to be involved in accidents. In order to prevent any unfortunate happenings, the family member's of the deceased will note the time of the death, and refer to an astrologer to check on the right time, to remove the corpse from the house to the cemetery. This indicates that the notion of "time" and "numbers" in Tamil are symbiotic in nature whereby "good time" and "bad time" is indicated by set of numbers which match to a particular person's horoscope, that is built by calculating on his birth or death numbers and time.

In fact, numerology and astrology portray a deep-seated Indian way of thinking and is linked with the religious and cultural way of life of many Malaysian Tamils in all walks of life. As thus, numbers play a very important role in the everyday life of a Malaysian Tamil. This is as shown in Excerpt 67 in Conversation 24 of this study. The various cultural connotations of numbers explain why the

participants of this age group used Tamil to mention numbers in their English conversations.

4.4.7 Colours

The participants of the 50 ≥ Year Age Group also used names of colours which are considered as unfortunate in the Tamil culture, in Tamil during their English conversations. The Tamil culture considers "black" as an omen of bad luck and is avoided as far as possible, even in funerals, as in the case of Excerpt 69:

Excerpt 69:

S: It seems the daughter and son were wearing **karuppu** (black). A black

Punjabi suit. The boy T-shirt. Got white or eh, blue lines.

V: That's all right *lah*. But sometimes **karuppu** (black), eh is not so, eh good. Generally! Or use grey *lah*. Blue also can what?

Conversation 24

Participant S, and Participant V in Excerpt 69 mention "**karuppu**" which indicate bad luck, in Tamil and then continue to mention other colours in English. The participants may have mentioned "**karuppu**" (black) in Tamil, probably to stress the Tamil cultural notion that "**karuppu**" is unfortunate. The friends in the conversation felt that the deceased man's children should not have used "**karuppu**" so as to ensure that no further ill luck befall the particular family in which the death occurred.

Many Malaysian Tamils, particularly the older generation also associate "**karruppu**" with "**kaathu karruppu**" (dark souls) which also carries the connotation of "black or evil souls". The popular belief is evil souls like "**kaathu**

karuppu" like **"karuppu"** or "black" colour. This also explains why Participant V mentioned **"karuppu"** in Tamil. Thus, the nuance carried by the Tamil word **"karuppu"** in this conversation is culturally conditioned.

4.4.8 Names of Animals

The participants used names of animal such as **"koli"** (chicken), and **"naai"** (dog) in Tamil during their English conversations with friends as in Excerpt 70:

Excerpt 70:

C: My house is the last house. You just have to walk, walk and be careful of the **naai** (dog)! There are plenty. Stray dogs. **Anju** (Five) dogs **alaiyithu** (are roaming)!

Conversation 21

Excerpt 70 indicates an interesting way in which participants C alternates the use of the word "dogs" and **"naai"** (dog). At first, participant C uses the word **"naai"** in Tamil, as a way of cautioning her friend. Then she goes on with her conversation and later, calls the **"naai"** as "stray dogs" and mentions "dogs" in English again. Then she intensifies the caution about the **"naai"** by using the Tamil verb **"alaiyithu"** (roaming). Thus, this clearly indicates that participant C used the Tamil word **"naai"** (dog) to caution her friend about the probability of being bitten by dogs. Here, the use of the Tamil word **"naai"** helps in triggering the emotion of fear of being bitten by a dog in the participant's friend's heart. This is because according to Burling (1970:172) when emotions are involved most bilinguals switch to their mother tongue, and in this case participant C switched to Tamil, in the midst of her English conversation with her friend.

Furthermore, since both the participant C and her friend are females, and are in the $50 \geq$ Year Age Group, and are probably not strong enough to run if chased by dogs. This explains why C felt the need to use "**naai**" instead of "dog" at the beginning and also probably to instigate the fear of being bitten by dogs. Participant C ends her topic by using another Tamil word "**alaiyithu**" (roaming) to reinstate the fear that the "dogs" (**naai**) near her place are dangerous because they are strays and are "roaming" (**alaiyithu**) around her place. In this case, the Tamil word "**alaiyithu**" carries the connotation that the dogs are not just roaming but are "roaming dangerously".

The researcher found out from the informal interviews (not transcribed) that the 21-49 Year Age Group of Tamils usually use the Tamil word "**alaiyathe**" (do not let your senses run wild (like a dog)) to tease their friends who show excessive interest in a girl whom they chance to meet, and this is especially so if she is attractive. In this case, the friend will usually advise his friend in a playful manner by saying "**naai maari alaiyathe**" (do not let your senses roam like a dog).

Also, it is also very common among the Hindu Malaysian Tamils to use the Tamil word "**alaiyithu**" (roaming) to mention the "lost soul" of a dead person who had died an "untimely death". The soul is said to "**alaiyithu**" (roam) because it could not attain "**athma shanthi**" (peace of soul) in order to be reborn into its next life (See also 4.4.6). Thus, they will say "**avi alayithu**" (the soul is roaming around) if the family members of the deceased person fall sick or meet with sudden accidents. These connotations of "**alayithu**" cannot be expressed by using the English word "roaming" and this explains why the participants of this study used the Tamil word "**alayithu**" in their English conversation with their friends.

4.4.9 Nicknames

The 50 ≥ Year Age Group of participants of this study used only one nickname to a friend who is extremely thin. He is known as "**Karuvadu**" (Salted Fish) among his friends. Excerpt 71 indicates that "**Karuvadu**" is respected among his friends even though they call him by a seemingly insulting nickname. This is indicated by the use of the honorific term "**avaru**".

Excerpt 71:

M: **Avaru varala ya?** (Didn't he come?)

N: Who?

M: **Karuvadu** (Salted Fish – here used as a nickname). He said he'll be here at five.

Conversation 22

4.4.10 Names of Tamil People

The participants of this age group mentioned typical Tamil names such as "**Om Namasivaya**", "**Balaraman**", "**Ramesh**", "**Radhakrishnan**", and "**Mariamamma**" when speaking to their friends. The participants in this age group belong to the older generation of Tamils who are more traditional, as compared to the younger groups of participants of this study who have more modern names such as "**Meena**", "**Rajiv**" and others (Refer to Conversations 10 and 7).

Excerpt 72:

M: **Rajakrishnan's** brother is married to my, eh, eh, **irunge** (wait) to my daughter's husband's sister. They are in Sarawak now.

Conversation 22

Excerpt 73:

C: But people know my husband.

M: Tell them **Om Namasivaya**, they will know ah?

C: *OH NO!* They call him **Siva**. They know.

M: Yeah. **Om Namasivaya** too long and complicated. *Tak masuk mulut.* ((They) cannot pronounce it.)

Conversation 20

"**Om Namasivaya**" in Excerpt 73 is the name of a person. However, "**Om Namasivaya**" is actually a mystical Hindu mantra, which is supposed to protect the people, who recite it in times of trouble and hardship. Names like "**Om Namasivaya**" are rarely found in the younger Tamil generation because they are considered to be old fashion names.

4.4.11 Question Words

Similar to the other two age groups, the participants in this age group also used question words to ask questions in Tamil. Tamil words such as "**Enna?**" (What?), "**Appuram?**" (Then (what?)), and "**Ethna?**" (How many?), were mentioned in Tamil. For example Participant M in Excerpt 74, used the Tamil question word "**Ethna?**" (How many?) to his friend, to find out the amount of money his friend had sign guarantor for someone.

Excerpt 74:

M: **Ethna** (How many) thousand?

H: Six thousand.

M: In fact eh, I also sign guarantor for this girl lah - **Sumitha's** sister-in-law, but they all paid lah.

Conversation 12

The participant probably used the Tamil question word "**Ethna**" (How many?) to get clarification on serious issues such as money matters. The Tamil question word "**Enna**" (What?), and "**Appuram**" (Then (what?)) were used by the participants to get clarification about the issues in discussion. The younger groups in this study also used Tamil question words in a similar way such as to clarify things and to assure a certain fact or issue (Refer to 4.2.1.9 and 4.3.1.10).

4.4.12 Use of Tamil Expressions

The analysis of the Tamil lexical items in the English conversations showed that all the age group of participants of this study, code switched to Tamil in the midst of their English conversations with their friends. The participants of this age group used various Tamil expressions, and Tamil idioms, in the course of their English conversations with their friends. This is as shown in Table 4.9 below:

Table 4.9: Use of Tamil Expressions and Idioms

• To take leave	Appurom pappom. (See you later.) Sari vange. (Come let's go.)
• Tamil idioms	Panam irruntha pathu m pesum. (Money can do anything.)

4.4.12.1 Farewells

"Appurom pappom" (See you later), "Sari vange" (Okay come let's go), and "Poittu varom" ((We) are leaving) are three different ways in which the participants of the 50 ≥ Year Age Group expressed their leave taking to their friends. The term "Appurom pappom" is the polite Tamil way of taking leave. "Sari vange!" is a term that used if two people are involved in the leave taking. The term "Sari vange" (Okay come let's go) is also used because it does not sound as final as the English way of saying farewell. This is as shown in Excerpts 75, 76 and 77:

Excerpt 75:

L: Appurom pappom. (See you later.) Sorry because I have to go to Kampung

Rajah. Bye.

M: Okay. **Pappom** (See you) - Namaste (Welcome). *NO, NO!* Qhuthafis!

(Goodbye!)

((LAUGHTER))

Conversation 22

Excerpt 76:

V: Mm. What to do?

S: Today's **pu** (flowers) all, I'm giving it there *lah*. No need to charge *lah*. **Punyam - tha- na?** (It is a good deed, (isn't it?)) **Avaroda periappa** (His father's elder brother) is doing everything. Crying *lah*! **Sari vange!** (Come (let's go)!)

Conversation 23

Excerpt 77:

M: Shy. **Appa** (Father). **Amma** (Mother) downan (do not want). **Pathi pothum!** (Grandmother is enough!) **Sari, poittu varom.** (Okay (we are) leaving.)

Conversation 20

As in other Asian cultures, the Malaysian Tamils too, place much importance in the exchange of greetings and farewells. The Tamil expression "**Sari, poittu varom.**" as in Excerpt 77, when literally translated means "Okay, we'll go and come." However, this translated version will sound absurd to a person who does not have any background knowledge of the Tamil culture. This is because most of the Malaysian Tamils treat saying farewell almost like a ritual. If a fellow Tamil says "**Na poren.**" (I am going.) it is considered as an omen of bad luck because the statement implies that the person is going never to return forever. A "cultured" Tamil usually says "**Poittu varen.**" (I will go and come.) even though he or she is sure of not going back to the same person's place again. Thus, it is common for Tamil parents to chide their children if they say "**Na poren.**" (I will go.), especially if they are visiting relatives and other Tamil people. This is because "**Na poren.**" is a culturally inappropriate expression, especially if used to family members, friends,

and to other Tamils (See Also 4.2.2.7, 4.4.12.1 and 4.3.2.4).

The older Malaysian Tamils place much more importance in this cultural way of saying farewell. This may be due to the fact that many Tamils believe in the concept of reincarnation whereby, a soul is said to be reborn again and again. Thus, the concept of the "final departure" is not found in the Hindu way of life. This also explains why the participants, particularly the ones in the 50 ≥ Year Age Group used terms like "Sari, poittu varom" (Okay, we are going and coming) and "Poittu varen." (I will go and come.) in their English conversation with their friends. Some of the Tamils of the 50 ≥ Year Age Group of this study also used the English version of saying farewell like "Goodbye/Bye", and "See You" in their English conversations with their friends. However, this way of saying farewell is not very popular in the 50 ≥ Year Age Group as compared to the younger participants of this study. The younger group of participants expressed English farewell terms such as "Good bye", and "See you" probably because of the influence from their non-Tamil friends who speak English to them. It may also be an indication of language shift taking place among the younger generation of Tamil in Malaysia (Refer to Interview 1).

4.4.12.2 Tamil Idioms

The participants of this age group also used Tamil idioms in their English conversation with their friends. For example, Participant S in Excerpt 80 used the Tamil idiom "**Panam irruntha tha-n pathu-m pesum.**" (Money can do anything.) to explain the importance of making money when there is an opportunity. Participant S also used the word "**chetti**" (money lender) to associate to the Tamil idiom "**Panam irruntha tha-n pathu-m pesum.**" because a "**chetti**" is a person who is

usually very rich, and loans out money for high interests.

Traditionally, a "chetti" has a popular connotation of a miser and this explains why Participant S associated "**Panam irruntha tha-n pathu-m pesum.**" to "chetti". The implied connotation here is the "Money is Power" concept, and this is best expressed by using Tamil expressions and words such "**Panam irruntha tha-n pathu-m pesum.**" and "chetti" as in Excerpt 78:

Excerpt 78:

S: **Panam irruntha tha-n pathu-m pesum.** (Money can do anything.) We must be like the **chetti** (money lender).

Conversation 20

Excerpt 79 is an example of a Tamil idiom that was recorded in the 50 ≥ Year Age Group in this study.

Excerpt 79:

L: Mothers shouldn't say. Their words is powerful, theiva vakku (God's word).

Summa koda solla kudathu namba (We shouldn't say it even for fun)! ...

Atha nala than, yaru vaye le pattalum, mother eh respect pannunum (That's why, we must never talk against our mother and we must respect her).

Conversation 25

As in the Malay culture, the traditional Tamils in Malaysia also believe that mothers' curses have the divine power of becoming true. In modern times, this belief seems to have established itself into a deep-seated conventional norm among the Malaysian Tamils. Generally, the Tamil culture regards mothers highly and they are

respected and revered, next to God. And anything related to the Hindu Gods such as in performing a "poojai" (prayers), and the recital of "mantras" are performed by using the Tamil Language. Even though the participant used the Tamil idiom "varu vavele pattalum, mother eh respect pannunum" with two English words in it, the connotation of the Tamil idiom "varu vavele pattalum, mother eh respect pannunum" is clear. And since mothers are highly respected in almost a divine-like manner, the participants used Tamil idioms when talking about a mother's curse as in Excerpt 79. In fact Participant L equated a mother's words or even her curse to "Theiva vakku" (God's word).

The Tamil expression "Theiva vakku" (God's word) is an idiom that implies that the "Theiva(m)" (God) mentioned is not any other God, but is the Supreme God of Hinduism. As thus, the Tamil expression "Theiva vakku" carries the added Tamil cultural and religious connotation.

4.4.13 Translated Tamil Idioms

The 50 ≥ Year Age Group of Malaysian Tamils of this study also translated Tamil idioms into English such as "His time has come.", "Like mother-daughter.", and "A sin to a mother is great." in their English conversations. However, the researcher did not attempt to analyse this phenomenon due to the restricted scope of the study. Future studies can be conducted on this linguistic phenomenon. The examples in Excerpt 80, 81 and 82 indicate this phenomenon:

Excerpt 80:

L: *REALLY*, it's not a small matter you know! Even though we are old now - we are still our mother's son and daughter what? That will never change. A sin, sin to a mother is great ((TRANSLATED TAMIL IDIOM)).

Conversation 24

Tamil translation: **Thaai pavam pollathathu.**

Excerpt 81:

K: Yah lah, - mother and daughter, all the same lah ((TRANSLATED TAMIL IDIOM)). Somehow it all comes to the same amount.

Conversation 19

Tamil translation: **Tayu-m pilai-um onne tha-n.** (Mother and daughter, all the same.)

Excerpt 82:

S: My daughter's classmate what, **avaru** (he)? So young. What to do? His time has come ((Translated Tamil Proverb)).

Conversation 23

Tamil translation: **Naeram vathuruchu.** ((His) time has come.)

4.4.14 Conclusion

Just like the other two age groups, the participants of the 50 ≥ Year Age Group used Tamil words and expressions in the form of collocations in their English conversation with their friends. However, this age group used Tamil idioms in their English conversation and this phenomenon is not found in the other two age groups.

This indicates the mental make up of the participants in the $50 \geq$ Year Age Group that places much importance to the Tamil cultural and religious way of thinking. The next section will discuss the other lexical items used in the participants' English conversations.

4.5 Other Findings

In the course of the analysis of the data, the researcher found that the participants of the study also code switched to various other lexical items and expressions from Bahasa Melayu, Sanskrit, Hindi, and Chinese. The researcher also located words pertaining to the Malaysian variety of English in the participants' English conversations. However, due to the limited scope of the study, the researcher did not attempt to delve deep into the use of the lexical items and expressions. A detailed analysis of the lexical items and expressions may lead to the discovery and deep understanding of the linguistic behaviour and linguistic adaptation of the Malaysian Tamils who speak English in the domain of friendship.

4.5.1 Sanskrit Lexical Items

Apart from the Tamil lexical items, the researcher also noticed Sanskrit lexical items in the participants' English conversations. The lexical items used are as shown Table 4.10:

Table 4.10: Use of Sanskrit Lexical Items

• <u>Karma</u>	(Hinduism law of cause and effect).
• <u>Cyber</u>	(Zero).
• <u>Dhoshyam</u>	(Sin of one's past life).
• <u>Om Shanti</u>	(Be at Peace).

Sanskrit lexical items such as "**Karma**", "**Dhosyam**", and "**Om Shanti**" are used in the English conversations of the participants to express Hindu religious terms and meanings. Important Hindu religious texts such as the "Vedas" and the "Bhagvadgita" are written in Sanskrit. Many Hindu temples in Malaysia, still use Sanskrit mantras in the performing of "poojai" (prayers) and many other important Hindu concepts such as "karma" and "dhosyam" are expressed in Sanskrit by Malaysian Tamils.

According to Menan (1997: 262) Sanskrit is still in use because it is a "profound, intricate and abstract language" which has the ability to describe the divine concepts and the more "subtle feelings of mankind". This is as shown in Excerpt 83:

Excerpt 83:

S: It's a **Dhosyam** (Sin of one's past life) on the part of the bride, the bride's side, nothing to do with your **maccan** (brother-in-law).

Y: I donno (do not know) *lah*. They all say **karma** (Hinduism law of cause and effect) *lah*, this *lah*, that *lah*.

Conversation 15

However, the Sanskrit lexical items used in this study need not be viewed in isolation because much of the Tamil lexical items originate from Sanskrit. For example, the word "**karma**" is used so frequently that it is considered a Tamil word.

4.5.2 Hindi Lexical Items

The analysis of the data also revealed the use of Hindi lexical items in the English conversations of the participants of the study. The Hindi lexical items were used for various reasons as shown in Table 4.11:

Table 4.11: Use of Hindi Lexical Items

• Names of Hindi movie titles	<i>"Dil To Pagal Hai"</i> ,
• Types of clothes	<i>"Dupata"</i> (Shawl of a Punjabi costume),
• Kinds of food	<i>"Gulab"</i> (A kind of candy),
• Welcoming and Taking leave	<i>"Namaste"</i> (Hello/Welcome) and <i>"Khutafis"</i> (Goodbye).

This indicates that there is a considerable influence of Hindi lexical items in the linguistic adaptation of the Malaysian Tamils in the domain of friendship. Names of Hindi movies such as *"Dil To Pagal Hai"* are popular because of the slightly similar cultural values that between the Hindi speaking people and the Tamils. Besides Hindi movies, names of costumes worn by Hindi speaking people from North India such as the "Punjabi costume" is also very popular among the Tamil females. Thus, they mention words like *"dupata"* (the shawl of a Punjabi costume), in Hindi. The participants also used Hindi to mention names of traditional North Indian food such as *"gulab"* (a kind of candy) in their English conversations. The above names of movies, clothes and food may have been mentioned in Hindi because there are no specific terms in English for these culture specific words.

4.5.3 Bahasa Melayu Lexical Items

The analysis of the findings also showed that the participants expressed Bahasa Melayu lexical items in their English conversations. Some of the Bahasa Melayu that were used by the participants of this study are used to various reasons as shown in Table 4.12:

Table 4.12: Use of Bahasa Melayu Lexical Items

• Names of Animals as Insults	<i>babi</i> .
• Names of Malay Food	" <i>sambel</i> " (<i>sambal</i> - gravy), <i>karipap</i> (currypuffs).
• Names of Places and Landmarks	No, go past <i>Sungai Lang</i> ((name of a place)). Turn left <i>Kelapa sawit</i> . (Oil palms.) Some more <i>kelapa sawit</i> (oil palms). Got <i>orang asli</i> (natives) at the junction.
• Particle " <i>lah</i> "	Go <i>lah</i> you!

The participants used Bahasa Melayu lexical items and expressions in their English conversation for various reasons such as to insult people by using names of animals such as *babi* (pig). Names of Malay food such as "*karipap*" and "*sambal*" were mentioned in Bahasa Melayu probably because there are no English equivalents for these words. This is because these food are culturally conditioned, and as such it is difficult to give the exact translation of them in English. For example, the Bahasa Melayu word "*sambal*" does not really refer to the English "gravy". In fact, "*sambal*" is so frequently used that many Tamils in Malaysia consider "*sambal*", as a Tamil word. The participants of this study mentioned "*sambal*" as [sambəl] (See Appendix D: Conversation 1).

In addition, names of places, streets and landmarks are also mentioned in Bahasa Melayu for clarity and easy understanding. In fact, it will be confusing and misleading to translate names of places, streets and even landmarks into English. This explains why the participants used these terms in English.

The Bahasa Melayu particle "*lah*" has a special priority in the English sentences spoken by the participants of the study. Most of the "*lah*" are placed at the end of the sentences. The use of the particle "*lah*" helps to create an atmosphere of closeness and informality and is used as an indication of friendly gesture. The participants also used the shortened version of "*lah*" that is, "~ ah" in their conversations. The Malaysian "~ ah" used in this study are used to seek confirmation by the participants, and also used as a softer and friendlier tail word. In fact, Lee Su Kim (1996:8) says that the Malaysian "~ ah", could cover "a whole gamut of responses ranging from being a question to a reply dripping in sarcasm depending on the intonation".

4.5.4 Chinese Lexical Items

The researcher also noticed Chinese lexical items in the recorded conversations of the participants of the study. This may probably due to the multilingual setting in Malaysia that might have allowed the participants to use Chinese lexical items from various dialects, in their English conversations with their friends. The Chinese lexical items used in the study are as shown in Table 4.13:

Table 4.13: Use of Chinese Lexical Items

• <u>Kamching</u>	- is Mandarin for friendship.
• <u>Amoi</u> (girl)	- a term from the Kek dialect, which is used to address a young unmarried girl.
• Various vulgar words	
• <u>Wo ai nee</u>	- is a Mandarin sentence which means "I love you".

• <u>Chow</u>	is a word from the Hokkien dialect, which means "Go".
• <u>Sheau Moy</u>	is a Cantonese word for a kind of Chinese food.

However, Lee Su Kim (1996) explains that many of these words such as "Kamching", "Amoi" and "Chow" could also be termed as part of Malaysian English because they are widely used by many Malaysians as an indication of the solidarity between the different races in Malaysia.

4.5.5 Malaysian English

The analysis of the recorded conversation also showed the use of words typical to the Malaysian variety of English. This phenomenon may be due to the linguistic factors in Malaysia in which the Tamils live in. Some of the words and expressions that are typical to the Malaysian variety of English used in this study are as shown in Table 4.14:

Table 4.14: Use of Malaysian English

• <u>Can lah</u>	(Refer to Conversation 1).
• <u>one</u>	(Refer to Conversation 1) is used as a Malaysian English tail word.
• <u>cabut</u>	(Refer to Conversation 1) is a Bahasa Melayu word that means "to leave the scene or get out fast".

• <u>tension</u>	(Refer to Conversation 2) means pressured or stressed.
• <u>potong trip</u>	(Refer to Conversation 4) means to cut queue. It is a Bahasa Melayu word.
• <u>dowan</u> (do not want)	(Refer to Conversation 13) is the simplified form of a popular Malaysian English word that means "do not want".
• <u>tink</u> (think)	(Refer to Conversation 12) is the simplified form of a popular Malaysian English word which means "think".
• <u>teruk</u>	"Teruk" has an array of meanings such as "disgusting", "bad", and "terrible". (Refer to Conversation 9).
• <u>~lah</u>	"~lah" is a very popular Bahasa Melayu particle which is found in almost all the recorded conversations of the participants of this study. It is usually used at the end of a sentence to produce a softening tone.

The Malaysian English words that were used by the participants are actually from the different languages in Malaysia. A reader who is not familiar with Malaysian English may feel that some of the indicated words such as "donno" (do not know), and "tink" (think) are words, which are pronounced wrongly. However, a more informed reader will find that these words are typical realisations the Malaysian variety of English.

4.6 Main Findings

The recorded conversations and the informal interviews conducted in this study indicate the presence of Tamil lexical items in the English conversations of the Malaysian Tamils in the domain of friendship. The lexical items are used for various reasons such as to denote Hindu traditional, cultural, and religious meanings, and for various other reasons as discussed in this Chapter.

However, a detailed analysis of the recorded conversations, indicates the presence of lexical items from other languages such as Sanskrit, Bahasa Melayu, Hindi, and Chinese in the participants English conversations. Terms from the Malaysian English were also found in the participants' English conversations. However, these phenomena were not discussed in detail because of the limited scope of the study

4.6.1 Literal Translation of Tamil Lexical Items

Another phenomena which was noticed during the data analysis is the misunderstanding and irritation that disturbed the participants, which was caused by the direct translation of English lexical Items into the Tamil Language during the English conversations of the participants. Two friends in a conversation were offended because one of the friends literally translated the word "mix" into Tamil.

Excerpt 84:

X: You hungry not?

D: Never mind *lah*!

D: I'll **kindran** (mix) you Milo ok?

D: What do you mean "**kindran**"? You think I'm a cow or what?

((UNEASY LAUGHTER))

X: Eh, I mean I'll mix you a cup of Milo *lah*!

((LAUGHTER))

Note: "**kindran** - (**kindu**)" is the Tamil literal translation for "mix" in English.

Conversation 13

Excerpt 84 indicates that literal translation from Tamil to English can cause confusion and even misunderstanding. Participant D in the conversation used "cow" as an example because she comes from an agricultural background. The researcher found out later that cow owners usually "**kindran**" (mix roughly) black sugar with cow's feed for their cows. Thus, the idea of M "mixing" (**kindran**) "Milo" (a kind of beverage) for D sounded offensive to D and hence, the source of conflict.

Another example from the conversations which was recorded is the misunderstanding created by the Tamil word "**tinnu**" (eat). The conversation took place in the home of Participant U during teatime. Participant U is Tamil-primary school educated while Participant S comes from a rather strong English Language background. T is the wife of U who speaks and writes very good Tamil, and she speaks average English. This is as shown in Excerpt 85:

Excerpt 85:

S: **Aiya**, what is so funny lah? I mean, eh, eh, if eh, you know how is it with

=

U: Stop blaming her lah.

T: **Wangae** (come), tea and kuih (cakes) is ready.

S: **Wa-la poi tinnuvom**. (Come, let's go and eat.)

T: You don't have to "**tindran**" okay? Take your own sweet time and what you say? **Sapedingae** (eat properly).

S: ((SHORT EMBARRASSED LAUGHTER))

U: Eh, come *lah* yah (man).

Note: - "**tinnu**" is usually used to animals eating food.

"**Tinnu**" also refers to eating (by humans) in small amounts (as when eating snacks). However it is difficult to give the exact translation of "**tinnu**" in English because of the derogatory connotation attached to the word, if used on humans.

Conversation 16

Excerpt 85, also indicates that English educated Tamils, and Tamils who are not so proficient in the Tamil Language, tend to use the literal translation of English words when speaking to their friends. This may be due to the limited vocabulary that they may have in Tamil. However, the Tamil-primary school educated Tamils may have been exposed to more of the Hindu way of life, and Hindu religious and cultural concepts. Furthermore, this group of Tamils may also have more than one lexical choice for a specific term and this explains why they used words like "**tinnu**" in their English conversations with their friends.

Thus, Excerpt 86 is a good example whereby the Standard and Proper Tamil was used by the participants who were Tamil-primary school educated. The more colloquial Tamil was spoken by many of the Non-Tamil school educated participants, and also by others who were not very proficient in their Tamil.

4.7 Summary

There is the influence of the mother tongue Tamil in the English spoken by Malaysian Tamil in the domain of friendship. This is because the participants of the study code switched to Tamil in the midst of their English conversations. This can be seen by the presence of Tamil lexical items in the English spoken by the participants of this study. Cultural, religious, and other sensitive matters are conveyed more effectively when Tamil lexical items are used in the English conversations of the participants. The study also showed that both the Tamil-school educated and the Non-Tamil school educated Malaysian Tamils who speak English in the domain of friendship use Tamil lexical items in their English conversations. However, the participants are usually not aware of the usage of the Tamil lexical items in their conversations. In fact, the friends who took part in the interviews mentioned that they use Tamil lexical items "automatically" or subconsciously in their English conversations (See also Interview 2, and Interview 3).

The use of Tamil lexical items in their English of the Malaysian Tamils in the domain of friendship helped create a closer bond and better understanding of meaning among the friends. Therefore, Tamil acts as a group identifier because the participants share Tamil as a common language among them. In this way, various values such as religious values, cultural values, and beliefs are shared between them

during their English conversations. Thus, this helps in creating a strong sense of solidarity among the friends.

The Malaysian Tamils of this study also used Tamil lexical items to fill in the lexical gap between the English Language and the Tamil Language. The participants use Tamil religious and cultural lexical items in their English conversations simply because it is difficult or impossible to translate those lexical items into English. This is in line with Larson's argument (1984:55) that "since languages combine meanings differently there may be many words that may not have an exact one-word equivalent in the receptor language. These Tamil lexical items are generally used in particular contexts such as in the religious and cultural contexts. Thus, there is no real necessity to translate these Tamil lexical items into English.

Besides Tamil, the participants also code switched to Bahasa Melayu in their English conversations. This phenomenon is indicated by the presence of Bahasa Melayu words, and expressions in the participants' English conversations. Besides Bahasa Melayu, the participants also used lexical items from Sanskrit, Hindi, and Chinese. The participants also used words pertaining to the Malaysian English variety in their English conversations with their friends. This indicates the multilingual nature and the linguistic adaptation of the Malaysian Tamils of this study. However, these lexical items are not discussed in detail due to the limited scope of the study (Refer to 1.4).

In conclusion, the researcher has traced a wide range of code switching, and other linguistic phenomena in the English conversations of the participants of this study. However, only one small part of the phenomena, that is the influence of the Tamil lexical items in the English spoken by the participants, has been analysed in detail. This is due to the limitation of the scope of the study.