

CHAPTER FIVE

5. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION OF THE TEST

5.1 INTRODUCTION

It is assumed that the more standard or acrolectal variety will be used in a test situation compared to for example informal conversation among friends. Based on this assumption a test (refer to appendix 3) was conducted to identify the respondents' highest variety. The test consisted of four sections. The first section aimed to identify the ability of the respondents to identify standard *yes/no* question structures. The second section aimed to test if the respondents were able to provide the standard tag. The third section was aimed at observing if the respondents were able to use *wh* forms to formulate standard *wh* questions. The last section of the tests required the respondents to change direct questions to the indirect form. All the sections correspond to the responses obtained from the structured questionnaire will answer the third research question which is to identify to what extent are the DSE are able to use the standard forms when forming questions.

5.2 RESULTS OF THE TEST

Table 5.1 summarises the test scores of the respondents. The detailed scores of each respondent is presented in Appendix 4.

TABLE 5.1
Respondents Written Test Scores on Question Forms

Respondents	<i>Yes/no</i> Questions	<i>Wh</i> questions	Tag questions	Indirect questions
Percentage	99.29	97.62	72.50	17.86

5.2.1 WH QUESTIONS

A total of 97.62% answers produced in the test (refer Appendix 3 and 4) indicated that almost all the respondents were able to use the standard *wh* question forms. Section C on the use of *wh* questions showed that the TG was able to construct standard forms of these questions. Although the percentage is much higher than their use of standard forms in the verbal responses (70.91%), this result is consistent with the use of English by the DSE and suggests that they are able to move up and down along the lectal cline (refer to 2.3) according to the context of use. Thus, the findings suggest that the DSE may be downshifting when using the *wh* forms in questions in the informal speaking context. Nevertheless, they still used the standard forms (63.36%) more frequently compared to the non-standard forms (36.64) in this context except that they sometimes use particles to end their questions especially the particle *eh*. However particles were never used in the written test. The use of particles in these questions is a sign of informality and to make the question sound less direct.

5.2.2 YES/NO QUESTIONS

All the respondents used the standard forms more than 60% of the time in the six *yes/no* questions posed in section B of the test. Only three respondents did not obtain 100% score. Thus 99.29% of the responses were of the standard form. The questions aimed to test if they inversed the auxiliary in *yes/no* questions beginning with *is/are* and *has/have*. However, based on responses to the structured questionnaire, only 54.02% of the responses for questions beginning with *is/are* were inversed (refer to 4.2.2.4). In the verbal *yes/no* questions beginning with *has/have*, it was found that only 34.90% of the responses used the standard structures (refer to 4.2.1.5). Yet, in the test nearly all of them used the standard structure. This indicates that the respondents are able to use the standard forms when the situation demands for it. This again shows that they are able to move along the

cline. Due to simplification of the language forms, in the verbal interactions, the standard forms were not used. The non-standard forms are simplified and as such the utterance often seems like a statement or just a phrase. Thus particles are used in order to probably mark them as questions.

Furthermore, the *wh* questions are used when the speaker is requesting for information and as such there is a tendency to keep to the standard forms even in the informal speaking interactions so as to be not misunderstood. However, response to a *yes/no* questions is simple resulting in the non-standard response being more prevalent.

5.2.3 TAG QUESTIONS

The test results showed that 72.50% (203/280) of the positive and negative tags used by the respondents were of the standard variety and thus 27.50% used the non-standard forms. Furthermore, only 18 of 28 (64.29%) respondents scored more than 50%. Of these only ten respondents scored 100% (refer to Appendix 4). One of the reasons is because some of these respondents were unaware of what tag questions were. The non-standard forms were mainly due to structures of positive statements with positive tags (53.25%). Thus, it is the negative tags that most respondents have difficulty with. Other non-standard forms were negative statements with negative tags (11.69%), replacement of the word *right* in place of the tag (10.39%) and others where the respondent did not use tag questions (24.68%). Only two respondents used the tag *right* in the test.

A total of 72.50% of the written test responses for the tag questions were in the standard form. Thus, this question form is still largely understood and used by them although there seems to be many instances where these respondents did not use the standard tag even in test situations.

In the verbal response for positive tag questions, only 0.52% of the responses were in the standard form while for the negative tag only 1.04% were in the standard form (refer to 4.2.4.3). In the verbal responses it was found that the DSE often ended the statement with the word *right*. This once again suggests that the DSE possesses two different lectal systems-one associated with the standard form and the other with a localised colloquial form and they are able to extract from the relevant system according to use, in this case a written test.

5.2.4 INDIRECT FORMS IN QUESTIONS

In this section of the test, only 17.86% of the responses were in the standard form. This was the lowest score in all the sections tested. All the non-standard forms in this section were due to the non inversion of the subject and the auxiliary (refer to 2.4.5). Furthermore ten of the respondents did not get even one of the questions correct. Some of the examples from the test responses are:

1. Peter asked me how old am I?
2. Peter asked me where was I going?
3. Peter asked me who was I talking to ?
4. Peter asked me when is the due date for the book?
5. Peter asked why are the questions so difficult?

This is consistent with the low percentage of standard forms found in the verbal responses (5.36%) (refer to Chapter 4.2.4.3) as well. The low percentages in both the formal written and informal spoken context may indicate that the use of non-standard forms may be more prevalent in this form of questions. Perhaps the standard form of questions in the indirect form is not frequently used in Malaysia thus there may be only one system operating rather than two (the standard and the non-standard) or a blurred system.

One respondent scored 100% (respondent 4) but in the verbal response only 12.5% of her responses were in the standard form (refer to Figure 4.8 and Appendix 4). Respondent 4 is one who uses some Tamil as she has her grandparents living with her and she communicates with them in Tamil. She uses some Tamil to communicate with her friends as well. However, she was considered a DSE as she used only English to express her feelings of anger and sadness and to communicate using SMS and the electronic mail. On the other hand, Respondent 12 (R12) who is an L1 English has limited ability to use her MT. She uses some Tamil at home but they are simply markers as her parents are able to speak English. However, her test results for this section is 80% while her use of the standard forms in verbal interactions was 50%. Thus, probably R12 does not down shift as much as R6. As such, the ability to use another language effectively probably enables one to move lower down the lectal cline. Furthermore, the use of the non-standard structures in the indirect forms may also have become a natural part of the DSE. As the test scores for this section indicates, there is low awareness of these forms.

SUMMARY

The third research question in this study is on the extent to which the respondents are able to use standard forms of *wh* and *yes/no*, tag and indirect questions. The test results indicate that on the whole they are able to do so. Table 5.2 will show a comparison of the verbal and written response.

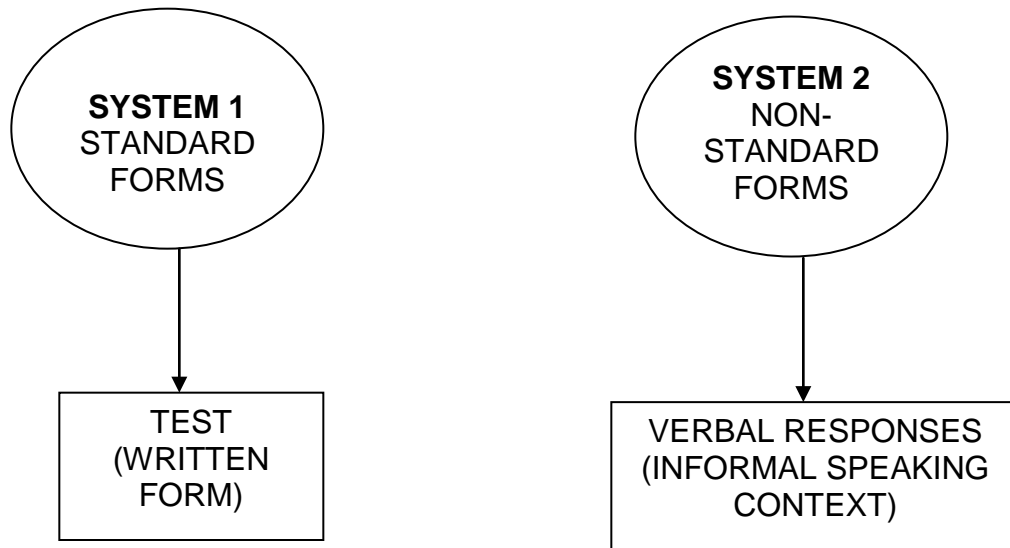
Table 5.2
Comparison of the Response to the Structured Questionnaire and the Written Test

Type of Questions	Percentage of standard verbal response	Percentage of standard written response
<i>Wh</i> forms	61.61	97.62
<i>Yes/no</i> questions	46.33	99.29
Tag questions	0.77	72.50
Indirect questions	5.36	17.86

There is a definite lectal cline regarding the extent to which the DSE are able to form standard questions with there being a 99.62% accuracy rate for *wh* questions followed by a 99.29% accuracy rate on *yes/no* questions, and a 72.50% accuracy rate for tag questions. This compares to the percentage of standard forms used in the informal speaking context: *wh* questions (61.61%), *yes/no* questions (46.33%) and tag questions (0.77%). Most of the respondents did not use the standard forms in their informal speaking responses of the indirect form. A similar situation was seen in the written form where all the non-standard forms were due to the fact that the subject and the auxiliary were not inverted.

Thus, on the one hand, it can be said that the respondents are operating on two distinct systems, each with its own rules and conventions: one for the standard question forms and one for the non-standard question forms; the former in the written context and the latter in the informal speaking context as illustrated in Figure 5.1.

Figure 5.1
Function of Question Forms of ME



This is not to say that they will always use the non-standard in a particular context but they would more likely use the non-standard in informal speaking context and the standard forms in tests. On the other hand, this system does not seem to apply to all question forms. Instead it is more distinct with *yes/no* questions, *wh* questions and tag questions as evidenced from the test results. Also with *wh* questions, there was a higher frequency of standard forms of questions in verbal responses. This could be because the DSE are more fluent speakers of English as indicated based on their exam results.

However, with indirect questions the system is more blurred and not as distinct as the other three question forms. Unlike the three other question forms, there was more use of non-standard forms in a context that one would expect the standard forms to be used. Being DSE's, it is more likely that they would use standard forms in the test situations but a high incidence of non-standard indirect question forms in the test indicate that they may be unable to use these standard forms. The interrogative word order is maintained in indirect questions which is common in other Englishes as well (refer to 2.6.4). This is probably due

to the simplification process where it is simpler to maintain the direct interrogative structure especially as the meaning is not compromised.

The respondents are able to present the standard forms for the test on *yes/no* questions and *wh* questions and this shows that the DSE are able to use the standard forms if they deem it necessary. Thus, the test indicates that the DSE are capable of moving along the cline and has a wide repertoire of the language. However, for questions in the indirect form and to an extent in tag questions, the DSE often use the non-standard variety and may not know the standard variety. Word order changes in the noun phrase and auxiliary inversion in questions and omission of the subjects and pronouns are some of the variations in Englishes around the world (Wade, 2007). Thus, the similar variations of the Englishes in countries that do not share another similar language other than English must be the result of simplification. Thus, the rise of a variety is not only due to the MT interference but due to the process of simplification as well.