CHAPTER 12

VARIATION OF RECIPROCALS

Crewe(1977) says in Standard British English the use of certain verbs such as `go/bring', `send/ fetch', give/take' and `lend/borrow', depends on the place from which the action is viewed, which is not the same as the place the speaker is at. In native English, `go', `send' and `take' should be away from the place, `bring' should be towards the place and `fetch' should be away and back to the place.

However, in Singapore English, `go' and `take' can both be towards the place, `bring' and `fetch' are both away from the place, and `send' away but accompanied by the addressee. In other words, `go' is often used for `come', `send' for `take', `bring' for `take', `fetch' for `take' and `take' for `bring'. Platt and Weber say that this non-native tendency may be due to the fact that some of the background languages of the new Englishes make no distinction between the concepts of `borrow' and `lend'. This is definitely true for the Malay language, in which `pinjam' is used for both `borrow' and `lend'. In the data the present researcher encountered a few examples of such non-native usage of reciprocal verbs.

12.1 Description of Variation of Reciprocals

12.1.1 accept as a loan

At an Oral Interaction Test some students were discussing a situation concerning two friends, Rosie and Rina. Rina has stolen Rosie's ATM card and has withdrawn some money using Rosie's card. The following sentence

was recorded from this discussion:

'The money that she has taken maybe Rosie can **accept as a loan.'**

Here Rosie is not the recipient but the giver of the loan, so it is not logical to use the word 'accept' here as it implies that she has taken the loan, and this can convey the opposite meaning. A more accurate term here would be 'consider' or 'regard'- she can consider the stolen money as a loan, so that her friend can later return it. As 'accept' and 'consider' are antonyms in this context, this can be considered an example of Variation of Reciprocals.

12.1.2 activities must entertain the students

The following comments were recorded during an Oral Interaction Test for the undergraduates:

'Other **activities must entertain the students.** These activities must involve all the year.'

It has already been established that the expression 'must involve all the year' is an example of Similar Expression Substitution'. The speaker meant to say 'must involve the students throughout the year'. In addition, the use of 'entertain' for 'activities' is also non-native and can be categorized as 'Variation of Reciprocals'.

12.1.3 assure-be assured

In the following sentence the speaker says: 'We can **assure** that our money is safe.' She meant 'We can **be assured** that our money is safe.'

12.1.4 avoid-prevent

Malaysians frequently use 'avoid' instead of 'prevent' and sometimes vice versa as well. These two verbs are near-synonyms that function differently syntactically. An example of 'avoid' instead of 'prevent' can be seen in the

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following sentence seen in a student's essay:

`This will create an awareness for the parents ... and what they should do to **avoid** the crimes repeated by their children.'

The word `avoid' can be categorized as `Variation of Reciprocals' since to a native speaker the sentence seems to indicate that the parents themselves should not repeat the crimes committed by their children! In actual fact, the writer meant that the parents should take steps to **prevent** their children from repeating their crimes. Thus the use of the verb `avoid' instead of `prevent' can be regarded as `Variation of Reciprocals'.

12.1.5 borrowing/lending

The following sentence was uttered by a young ME user:

`Thanks for **borrowing** me your pen.'

The same young boy also made the following request:

`May I **lend** your pen?'

A native speaker would have reversed the usage of these two words. He or she would have said:

`Thanks for **lending** me your pen.' And `May I **borrow** your pen?'

As mentioned by Platt and Weber(1980), Malaysians and Singaporeans are unable to differentiate between `borrow' and `lend' possibly due to the fact that some of the background languages such as the Malay language, make no distinction between the concepts of `borrow' and `lend'. For example, in the Malay language, `pinjam' is used for both `borrow' and `lend'. This is further supported by more recent researchers such as Nair(1999) who says, "the use of `borrow' in place of `lend' and vice versa is a prominent feature of Malaysian English".

12.1.6 bring you there

During an introductory presentation by an undergraduate, he mentioned that he is from the state of Perlis and that his hometown is close to the Malaysia-Thai border. He then offered to take his course-mates to Thailand for a holiday by saying: `I am willing to **bring** you there.'

The use of the word `bring' appears to be non-native here and he probably meant to say `I'm willing to take you there'. The use of `bring' could be considered an example of Variation of Reciprocals.

A similar example was seen in the Interactive Journal of another student:

`My sister sponsored me and **brought** me to Genting Highlands.'

The use of `brought' here is similar in its non-native usage as `bring' in the earlier sentence. The former was heard in spoken discourse while the latter was seen in written discourse. It has also been pointed out that `sponsored' is non-native usage in the above context.

In the following sentence there is a similar example of the non-native usage of `bring': `Worse come to worse, maybe she has to **bring** the problem to the Ministry.'

Here a native speaker would use `take' rather than `bring'. In native usage `bring' would be towards the person concerned while `take' would be away from the person concerned. In the case of `worse comes to worse' the native version is `worst comes to the worst' (See `Adapted Idioms')

12.1.7 finding-searching for

In ME the word `finding' is often used instead of `searching' as shown in the following statement made by my daughter: `I am **finding** for my tie.'

During a staff meeting, the following sentence was heard:

`If you feel this is not suitable, we will **find** other experts from other universities.'

In the Interactive Journal of an undergraduate, the word `find' was also used non-natively:

`If the question is there, you just read where it is, **find** where it is and answer the question.'

In native usage, `find' is the result of the search rather than the process of the search itself, and this sense of the word `find' is never used with `ing'. `Findings' is only used to refer to `information that is discovered as a result of research into something'(OALD,2000).

In ME usage, `find' invariably means `search for' rather than the native sense of `discover'. Hence the above usage of `finding' can be categorized as `Variation of Reciprocals'.

12.1.8 free sex is the ultimate consequence of having AIDS

During an Oral Interaction Test, the following sentence was heard:

`We know that **free sex is the ultimate consequence of having AIDS.'**

There seems to be a reversal of the word order in this sentence, as it does not appear logical from the native point of view. A native speaker would have probably said: `We know **AIDS is the ultimate consequence of having free sex.'**

12.1.9 handed over

The following sentence was seen in a Business news article:

`The buyers will **be handed** over their houses.'

A native speaker would have said: `The houses will be handed over to their

buyers' rather than `The buyers will be handed over their houses.' Due to the reversal of the verbs `handed over' in this sentence can be considered to be an example of Variation of Reciprocals.

12.1.10 inherit to their children - their children can inherit

In the following sentence read in a group essay written by undergraduates, the word `inherit' has been used in a non-native way:

`We believe... the public in general are now well-informed of the responsibilities and the role they have to play in creating a clean, smooth-flowing and crystal clear river that they can **inherit to their children.'**

A native speaker would have said: `...which their children can inherit.'

12.1.11 instilled their responsibility

The following was seen in the Interactive Journal of a student:

`The pupils should also **instilled their responsibility** to follow the time-table.'

A native user would have said: `The pupils should also **be instilled with a sense of responsibility** to follow their time-table.'

The act of instilling the responsibility should be done by other people such as teachers and parents, but in the sentence above, it appears as though the pupils were the people who were responsible for instilling their own sense of responsibility. Hence this could be considered as Variation of Reciprocals.

12.1.12 marry-get them married

The word `marry' can be used in two senses, in native English. Firstly, `when a man and woman marry, they become each other's husband and wife during a special ceremony. 'In the second sense, when a member of the clergy or the registrar marries two people, he or she is in charge of their marriage ceremony.

However, neither of these two native meanings seem to be used in the following utterance recorded in my data:

`After giving your children a good education, you need to **marry** them.'

Here the speaker is neither a member of the clergy nor the Registrar of Marriages, but a member of the Ceylonese Indian community in Malaysia, which is a conservative Indian community in Malaysia which still practises the custom of arranged marriages. Where such marriages are concerned, the responsibility for a marriage within the community lies with the parents of the prospective bride or groom.

Hence, the speaker meant that after fulfilling the responsibility of giving one's children a good education, parents have the additional responsibility of arranging good marriages for their children, namely marriages with eligible people within their own community. This seems to be an example of Variation of Reciprocal Verbs as the native usage which is passive (`get them married') has been replaced with the non-native use of active voice (to marry them).

12.1.13 risen-increased

The following comment was recorded at a Toastmaster's meeting:

`They have **risen** their membership to 20.'

The speaker meant that another new club which had been dwindling in membership has increased its membership to 20 members. However, the use of `risen' here is non-native as it reflects the result of the increase in membership rather than the act of increasing membership. Hence this is an example of Variation of Reciprocals.

12.1.14 society is taboo to the subject

In the following sentence heard during an Oral Interaction Test about sex education, there appears to be a non-native reversal of word order:

'We know that **society is taboo to the subject.'**

A native speaker would probably have said: 'We know that subject is taboo to society.'

12.2 Types of Variation of Reciprocals

There are altogether 15 examples of Variation of Reciprocals in this study. The present researcher has analyzed Variation of Reciprocals into two types, namely 'Antonym Substitutes' and 'Reversal of Word Order'.

12.2.1 Antonym Substitutes

The first type involves the use of antonym substitutes such as 'borrow' instead of 'lend'. Table 12.1 below indicates the eight examples of 'Antonym Substitutes' in Variation of Reciprocals.

Table 12.1

Antonym Substitutes in Variation of Reciprocals

Native	Non-native	Context of Usage
Give	Accept	'The money ... can **accept** as a loan'.
Lending	Borrowing	'Thanks for **borrowing** me your pen'.
Borrow	Lend	'May I **lend** your pen?'
Take	Bring	'I am willing to **bring** you there.'
Searching	Finding	'I am **finding** for my tie.'
Increased	Risen	'They have **risen** their membership to twenty'.
Prevent	Avoid	'... and what they should do to **avoid** the crimes repeated by their children.'
Pass on to	Inherit	'They can **inherit** to their children.'

12.2.2 Reversal of Word Order

The second type involves reversal of word order at the sentence level. In

each of the following examples in the data, the non-native Variation of Reciprocals are shown in bold while the native equivalents are shown in brackets:

'Other activities **must entertain** the students.'
(The students **must be entertained by** other activities)

'We can **assure** that our money is safe.'
(We can **be assured** that our money is safe)

'We know that **society is taboo to the subject.'**
('We know that the **subject is taboo to society)**

'We know that **free sex is the ultimate consequence of having AIDS..**
'('We know that **AIDS is the ultimate consequence of having free sex)**

'After giving your children a good education, you need to **marry them.**'(After giving your children a good education, you have to **get them married.')**

The buyers **will be handed over** their houses.
(The houses **be handed over** to their buyers)

'Other **activities must entertain the students.** These activities must involve all the year.'(The students **must be entertained** with other activities. They **must be involved** in these activities through the year.)

12.3 Description of Types

The first type, namely 'Antonym Substitutes' seems to be the more easily detectable type of Variation of Reciprocals and there are altogether 8 examples of this in the study. The second type, namely 'Reversal of Word Order' at the sentence level, is still a prevalent part of ME speech as there were 7 examples of these in the data. 'Reversal of word order' refers to a phenomenon which the present researcher would like to call 'putting the cart before the horse phenomenon'! This feature involves the non-native switching of the position of the subject and object in the sentence. Unlike 'Antonym Substitutes' it is less easily detectable as it tends to be embedded within sentences.

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12.4 Conclusion of Variation of Reciprocals

The present researcher has analyzed the non-native forms under Variation of Reciprocals into two types, namely 'Antonym Substitutes' and 'Reversal of Word Order'. The former type involves the use of antonym substitutes such as 'borrow' instead of 'lend', 'bring' instead of 'take' and 'find' instead of 'search for'. This seems to be the more easily detectable and common type of Variation of Reciprocals as there are altogether 8 examples of this in the study.

The second type involves reversal of word order at the sentence level. It involves the non-native switching of the position of the subject and object, or reversal of the subject-verb-object order, whereby the object seems to have changed places with the subject. Unlike 'Antonym Substitutes' the variation is less easily detectable as it tends to be embedded within sentences.

In conclusion, we can perceive two types of non-native forms under Variation of Reciprocals, namely 'Antonym Substitutes' and 'Reversal of Word Order'.