CHAPTER 13

LOCAL COMPOUND COINAGES

As was the case with Anthonysamy’s (1997) data under Coinages, all the Local Coinages in the data are multi-word units. Hence they have been categorized under ‘Local Compound Coinages’.

13.1 Description of Local Compound Coinages (in the data)

13.1.1 buy-back

Shelley (1995) says that ‘buy-back’ or ‘buy-back-home’ is equivalent to the American ‘takeaway’, except that it is from the consumer’s point of view, not the restauranteur’s. He says that it was probably used before ‘takeaway’ was coined by the Americans to distinguish between the cooked food purchased for taking home, and an order for food to be eaten on the spot.

This local compound coinage was seen used in a more figurative sense in a sub-headline, in the Business section of the Sun newspaper:

‘YTL Corp’s Share Buy-back.’

If ‘buy back’ can be considered a local coinage, then the above sense of ‘buy back’ can be considered to be a Semantic Extension of a local coinage.

13.1.2 cross-calling

At a recent training seminar organized by a Toastmaster’s club known as a ‘Speechcraft Seminar’, the following statement was made by the coordinator:

‘So I will be cross-calling as I can’t call you all one after the other.’

The expression ‘cross-calling’ seems to be a Local Compound Coinage as the speaker meant that she would not be calling the participants one after the other according to a name-list but according to the names of their facilitators.
This is because each facilitator has to be mentor to two or more participants before the participants present their speeches. The sense of 'cross-calling' here seems to be an extension of concepts such as 'cross-fertilization'.

13.1.3 downliners

The following expression was heard during a mock Business meeting in which undergraduates were made to play roles such as general manager, supervisor and sales chief:

'Make sure that your downliners are making money.'

In direct selling jargon, a 'downliner' is a person under you from whose sales returns you can make a small commission. Thus the more sales dealers you recruit, the more commission you can receive from their sales. This is the case with 'pyramid-selling' systems such as 'Cosway' and 'Amway'. This compound word seemed to have been coined from the commercial term 'downline'.

13.1.4 eat out

This compound coinage is a result of the social change whereby at least half the workforce are women who may not have time to cook at home. A typical question asked by many a wife every weekend is:

'Shall I cook or shall we eat out?'

Thus in ME lingo to 'eat out' means to eat at a restaurant or food-stall rather than to eat home-cooked food.

13.1.5 English-educated/Chinese-educated/Tamil-educated

At a Malaysian bazaar when a young girl thanked the present researcher for certain purchases with, 'Thank you, madam', there was a comment that her good manners must have been due to the fact that she must have been
'English-educated'. Expressions such as 'Tamil-educated', 'English-educated' and Chinese-educated' are Local Compound Coinages which are peculiar to countries such as Malaysia and Singapore where there are more than one language used as the medium of instruction in schools.

13.1.6 free bill

The original context of this expression was at a Toastmasters' meeting and the sentence uttered was:

'Area governors don't have a free bill.'

The speaker, who was also an 'Area governor', meant that Area governors had to pay for dinners just like anyone else, and would not be given any free meals. This seems to be non-native as 'free' and 'bill' do not collocate in a native sense. Hence this appears to be a local compound coinage.

13.1.7 handicapped home

Another example of this unlikely pairing off is in the compound coinage 'handicapped home'. In native English an adjective such as 'handicapped' would only be used for a person, and not for a 'home'. The native equivalent would be 'home for the handicapped'(Also see 'sick board'). Another compound coinage similar to 'handicapped home' is 'retarded home' which was seen in the Interactive Journal of a student: 'As for my case, although I haven't visited the Retarded Home, my husband and I buy essential things for them.'

13.1.8 heavy-going

In a figurative native sense something that is 'heavy' is serious and difficult to cope with, as in the sentence: 'It was all a bit heavy yesterday.' (BBC English Dictionary). From this sense, the expression 'heavy-going' seems to have been
coined:

'The speaker probably found the movie to be heavy-going because of the dialogue.'

Here the compound coinage 'heavy-going' may mean 'boring', 'complicated' or even 'slow-moving.'

13.1.9 high-rated

During a Toastmaster’s meeting the expression 'high-rated success' was heard. Here there seem to be a non-native compounded version of the native expression 'highly rated' as in 'The team was highly rated due to their to their success record' (OALD, 2000).

13.1.10 in-migration

In a native sense the word 'migration' means the movement of large numbers of people, birds and animals from one place to another. 'Immigration' is the process of coming to live permanently in a country that is not your own (OALD, 2000).

However, in ME there is a non-native version, namely 'in-migration' as shown in the following sentence recorded from a Business news article:

'The greater economic opportunities available in urban centres attracted in-migration and concentration of population in these areas.'

The meaning of 'in-migration' here is 'rural-urban resettlement or migration'. Since this is non-native and a coinage it can be considered an example of a Local Compound Coinage.

13.1.11 jobless rate

There seems to be a ME tendency for compounding unlikely pairs of words where they would remain as phrases in native English. An example of this
seems to be the expression "jobless rate" as used in the following sentence:

"Economic data released on Friday also showed the US jobless rate had fallen back to a 30-year low."

The ME speaker has given the attribute of being "jobless" to the "rate" rather than the unemployed people. A native speaker would probably have used the phrase "rate of unemployment" rather than "jobless rate."

13.1.12 last time

During an Oral Interaction Test, the following comment was made by one of the students about the role of parents:

"Last time we ourselves were grown up by them."

The expression "last time" can be considered a feature of spoken ME, which can be categorized as Local Compound Coinage. According to Leo (1995) in Singapore, the expression "last time" is used not only by children to refer to the recent past, but also by adults to refer to the time when they were children. An example quoted by him was when a Singaporean film critic in a TCS interview on Channel 5 said that new film productions were not like "movies last time" Yen (1990) described "last time" as an EOW or English-Origin Word which has undergone semantic change. She explains the meaning of "last time" as "formerly" or "previously". Nair (1999) in her article: "Malaysian English: Attitudes and Awareness in the Malaysian Context", says "last time" is a very common structure used in the Malaysian context to mean "formerly" or initially. She says at times the word "before" is used as an alternative. She says "last time" is due to influence from a Chinese dialect, namely Cantonese, where the same structure is used in a semantically identical way.

In addition to "last time" another non-native usage is "were grown up" which
has been categorized as 'Collocational Variation'(see 'Collocational Variation').

13.1.13 liver condition

In native English one says 'the condition of my (or someone's) liver' and not 'liver condition' as shown in the following sentence seen in an undergraduate's diary:

'A blood test showed that my liver condition was very bad.'

By compounding the two key words from the original phrase, the speaker has created a Local Compound Coinage - 'liver condition'.

13.1.14 look-see

This apparently ME term was heard in a Toastmaster's assignment speech in which it was used as an adjective:

'I don't mind going for a look-see interview.'

It seems to mean 'exploratory' or 'preparatory'. According to OALD(2000) it is a coinage used in colloquial American English and it means to take a quick look at something as in the sentence: 'Come and take a look-see'.

Though 'look-see' is not a purely ME coinage, and falls into a 'grey area' as a non-native item, its usage as an adjective is local. In American English its usage is only as a noun. A purely local version of it is 'look-see, look-see'. Yen(1990) has identified 'look-see, look-see' as a local coinage, and in her data, this form of Juxtaposed Reduplication refers to 'window-shopping'. This is shown in the following context in her data:

'No need to bring so much money lah. We just want to go look-see, look-see only.'

It has to be pointed out that in Yen's data, the reduplicated form occurred in mesolectic ME, signified by the marker 'lah', while in the present researcher's
data 'look-see' has occurred in acrolectal ME.

13.1.15 mind frame

In native usage, a 'mind-set' is a set of attitudes or fixed ideas that somebody has and that are too difficult to change as in 'the mind-set of the computer generation' (OALD, 2000).

This was what a Malaysian student probably meant when he used the word 'mind-frame' in his Interactive Journal:

'Ultimately this promotes the team to change their mind frame.'

There is no such thing as a 'mind frame' in native English so this could be considered a Local Coinage.

13.1.16 money-minded

This is a Local Compound Coinage that has some resemblance to the native expression 'money-grabbing'. A 'money-minded' person would be considered a mercenary person who only respects anyone or anything which can bring in more money.

13.1.17 on-going

The following compound coinage serves as an adjective:

'The talks are still on-going.'

A native speaker would have used the original verb 'going on' instead of converting it to an adjective.

13.1.18 one kind

This is another ME coinage, which could have been a shortened version of the native 'one of a kind.' However, the native form has the positive connotation of 'being exceptionally good', as shown in the sentence 'The performance was one of a kind.'
On the other hand, according to Baskaran(1991) the ME version has the negative connotation of 'being weird or peculiar' as shown below:

'She gave me a one kind look and stalked off angrily.'

In the data of another researcher, Yen(1990) 'one-kind' also occurs in a negative sense. In the following sentence it means 'unconventional in a bad sense':

'The traffic jam today was really one kind.'

In this sentence it means 'a negative human quality that defies description' (Yen,1990):

You one kind also lah. People already said don't tell her still tell. See what happens now.'

13.1.19 one-or-two-day

The following comment was heard during an Oral Interaction:

'This is not a one-or-two-day thing.'

The above non-native form appears to be a non-native compound adjective qualifying the non-specific subject 'thing'.

13.1.20 school-going children

The usage of 'school-going' in the following comment is an example of Local Compound Coinage:

'How many percent are they compared to the total amount of primary school-going children?'

13.1.21 second-last

The Local Compound Coinage 'second-last' was encountered both in informal writing as well as in formal spoken discourse.

It was read in a journal entry in a Masters thesis as follows:
'I feel quite sad talking about the fact that this is our second-last class.'

It was also heard during a formal address at a Toastmasters' meeting:

'This is the second-last meeting for the year.'

The native equivalent in spoken discourse would be 'last but one' and in formal written discourse would be 'penultimate' (OALD, 2000).

13.1.22 sick board

This is another unlikely pairing off of words in Malaysian English, leading to the creation of compound coinages. In native usage the equivalent of 'sick board' would probably be 'Board of Health'.

This is because in native usage the adjective 'sick' would only be used for a living subject such as a human being or an animal, and not for a 'board'.

13.1.23 slow talk

The compound coinage 'slow talk' was heard twice during Oral Interaction Tests. It refers to the process of negotiating calmly with people who are angry or upset, to prevent them from taking drastic action which may harm others.

The use of the word 'slow' is non-native, because it does not have the native sense of speaking slowly but rather the non-native sense of 'speaking calmly and rationally' to angry people to 'pour oil over troubled waters'.

13.1.24 stickability

In native usage the idiomatic expression 'stick at something' means to work in a serious and determined way to achieve something as in the sentence: 'If you want to learn to play a musical instrument well, you've got to stick at it.' (OALD, 2000).

From this sense ME speakers seem to have come up with the abstract noun
`stickability' as observed in the following sentence recorded at a Toastmaster's Division speech contest:

`Stickability is the key to success.'

The word `stickability' can be considered to be an example of Local Compound Coinage as it appears to be a fused compound consisting of two words, namely `stick' and `ability'. The use of the word `ability' is also appropriate here as this coinage also has the semantic sense of `the ability to stick on to doing something without giving up midway'.

The word `stickability' has also been categorized as an example of Derivational Variation as the use of the suffix `ability' is definitely non-native (see `Derivational Variation').

13.1.25 table talk

The Local Compound Coinage `table talk' seems to be a lexical item from ME street jargon that is immediately understood by the Malaysian criminal underworld. It refers to negotiations between two groups of gangsters to settle a dispute without bloodshed. During a `table talk' the opposing groups of gangsters sit around a table, with all their weapons laid down under the table, and try to negotiate a peaceful solution to avoid head-on conflict. It is usually carried out when both groups are equally strong and have encountered a conflict situation but the leaders want to avoid further trouble through peaceful negotiations.

The presence of a large table is crucial not only to accommodate all the important members of the gangs, but also to be large enough to cover the weapons of both warring parties, which are strategically laid down under it for two reasons. Firstly, as a show of force to the enemy group to say `we mean
business' and secondly, to be used for battle when negotiations fail.

13.1.26 that area people

During an Oral Interaction Test the following sentence was heard:

'I think I better advertise in the newspaper because not that area people are coming for the dinner.'

Here the speaker has compounded a native expression 'people of that area' to 'that area people'. This non-native compound consists of three root words rather than the conventional two.

13.1.27 undetable

This is a Local Compound Coinage which functions as an adjective such as in the expression 'undetable transaction'. It refers to the use of bribes to public officials to expedite a transaction.

13.1.28 upstanding

This seems to be a Local Compound Coinage that seems to be a creative reversal of the phrase 'standing up'. Its usage seems to be common at Toastmasters' meetings, and it is usually uttered at the beginning of every meeting, when the members present are invited to stand up to read in unison an invocatory statement called the 'Mission Statement of Toastmasters International'. It is usually used in the following way: 'Let us be upstanding.'

The frequency of occurrence of this non-native compound as well as its acceptance among most Malaysian toastmasters indicates that it is a feature of ME lexis that may be commonly used in Toastmasters' clubs.

13.1.29 well-connected

In native usage, the word 'connections' means 'a person or an organization that you know and who can help and advise you in your social or professional
life' as in the sentence: `One of my business connections gave them my name' (OALD, 2000).

In Malaysia `using one's connections' refers to a certain Malaysian way of getting things done - namely the strategy of effectively utilising powerful personal or family contacts in high places to expedite some official procedure in achieving some material benefit, and in the process bypassing official channels that may slow down the procedure or not guarantee success.

From this semantic sense, it follows idiomatically that a person with strong connections is `well-connected'. This Local Compound Coinage was used in the following sentence taken from the Business section of the `Sun':

`According to filings to the KLSE the well-connected Syed Ibrahim raised the equity interest in C.I. Holdings.'

In the sentence above, the native noun `connections' has developed into the non-native adjective `well-connected'.

From this example of non-native usage, it can be deduced that certain idiomatic coinages which were originally in one grammatical form in the native lexicon have evolved into other grammatical forms in the non-native lexicon.

**13.2 Features of Local Compound Coinages**

Most of the Local Compound Coinages in this study consist of the compounding of a noun and an adjective or verb or preposition as shown in the examples in Table 13.1 on the next page:
Table 13.1
Features of Local Compound Coinages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Adjective-Noun</th>
<th>Verb-Noun</th>
<th>Noun-Noun</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>cross calling</td>
<td>buy-back</td>
<td>Liver condition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English-educated</td>
<td>eat out</td>
<td>Mind-frame</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>free bill</td>
<td>school-going</td>
<td>Money-minded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>handicapped home</td>
<td>stickability</td>
<td>One-kind</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>heavy-going</td>
<td>Preposition-Noun</td>
<td>Table talk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>high-rated</td>
<td>In-migration</td>
<td>That area people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jobless rate</td>
<td>Upstanding</td>
<td>One-or-two-day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>last time</td>
<td>on-going</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>second-last</td>
<td>downliners</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sick board</td>
<td>undertable</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>slow talk</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>well-connected</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As seen from Table 13.2, the largest number of Local Compound Coinages in this study are of the 'Adjective-Noun' type and it consists of 12 out of 29 or 41.4% of the total number of Local Compound Coinages. The 'Noun-Noun' type is the second largest number, and it consists of 7 out of 29 or 24.1% of the total number. The 'Preposition-Noun' type consists of 5 out of 29 or 17.2% while the 'Verb-Noun' type consists of 4 out of 29 or 13.8% of the total number. The 'Verb-Verb' type consists of only 1 out of the 29 or 3.5% of the total number. All these figures are presented in Table 13.2 below:

Table 13.2
Types of Local Compound Coinages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of Local Compound coinages</th>
<th>Numbers</th>
<th>Percentages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adjective-Noun</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>41.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noun-Noun</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>24.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preposition-Noun</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>17.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verb-Noun</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>13.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verb-Verb</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total:</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
13.3 Reasons for Local Compound Coinages

The creative process whereby native words are compounded in ME often leads to the creation of lexico-semantic terminology to express non-native ideas. In the following section, the researcher will describe some of the socio-cultural reasons for the formation of Local Compound Coinages.

One socio-cultural reason seems to be to express certain typical Malaysian lifestyle habits. This was also stated by Yen (1990) who gave the following compounds to illustrate this feature: 'tea money', 'Malaysian time' and 'shophouse'.

The present researcher feels that rather than reflecting socio-cultural activities, some of the Local Compound Coinages reflect certain socio-cultural values or attitudes among Malaysians. Examples of Local Compound Coinages that reflect these in this study are negotiations to solve crisis situations in the form of table talk' and 'slow talk'. Both of these are reflections of the Malaysian attitude to solve problems peacefully especially when dealing with difficult people. Talking diplomatically to defuse hot tempers seems to be a typical Malaysian solution when solving problems in social relationships.

In addition, Malaysians do not like other people to pay for their meals as they have the attitude that a 'free bill' would make them indebted to others. Some Local Compound Coinages reflect the materialistic values of those in the 'fast lane' in a developing country. There is the lifestyle of the rich and powerful who are often 'money-minded' and 'well-connected'. Malaysians have come to accept the fact that very often the fastest way to get something done is through 'connections' in the right places.

Then there are Local Compound Coinages that genuinely reflect socio-cultural
lifestyle habits such as the Malaysian tendency to look around a shopping complex or night market without buying anything much. The compound coinage 'look-see' or its reduplicated version 'look-see look-see' reflects this tendency. Another Malaysian lifestyle habit is to 'eat out', especially on weekends and sometimes to 'buy back' cooked food from restaurants and food-stalls, which is comparable to the American habit of buying 'take-away' food.

ME speakers are also more literal than native speakers and prefer to use concrete or tangible terms rather than the more abstract native ones in their coinages. Examples of these coinages are 'Sick Board' for the native 'Medical Board', 'jobless rate' for 'unemployment rate' and 'school-going children' instead of just 'schoolchildren' and 'second-last' instead of 'penultimate'. Other examples are 'stickability', 'in-migration' and heavy-going'.

There is also the current trend among Malaysians with fixed incomes to supplement their incomes by doing direct selling which has given rise to the compound coinage 'downliners'. These 'downliners' are recruited by a direct seller to increase his or her cumulated commission.

Then, there is the older group of ME users who still yearn for things from yesteryear or from 'last time' when they meet each other.

Another tendency of ME users is to reverse the native word-order. Examples of these are 'on-going' where a native speaker would say 'going on', 'upstanding' where the native version would be 'standing up' and 'Handicapped Home' (Home for the Handicapped). In Table 13.3 on the next page examples of such lexical reversals are shown.
Table 13.3

Lexical Reversals in Non-native Compounds

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Non-native Compounds</th>
<th>Native Versions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>on-going</td>
<td>going on</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>upstanding</td>
<td>standing up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>handicapped home</td>
<td>home for the Handicapped</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>that area people</td>
<td>people of that area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>liver condition</td>
<td>the condition of the liver</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

13.4 Conclusion of Local Compound Coinage

The Local Compound Coinages in this study consist of different combinations of compounding. First, there is the compounding of adjective and noun such as 'cross-calling' or verb and noun such as 'buy-back' or preposition and noun such as 'in-migration'. Then there is the compounding of a verb with another verb such as 'look-see', is the compounding of a verb with another verb, while there are examples consisting of the compounding of a noun with another noun such as 'liver condition' and 'mind frame'.

In conclusion, ME coinages are often created due to the need to express cultural or social features of lifestyle habits and activities which are unique to Malaysians.