

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 INTRODUCTION

This study was initially driven by a clear conception of ME as one of the ‘mushrooming’ varieties of English resulting from various non-linguistic as well as linguistic factors, not as an inaccurate language that needs to be corrected. It is also not to be labeled as standard or non-standard as compared to the standard varieties such as SBE. Gonzalez (1997:1) points out that “in many post-colonial societies previously under the dominance of English-speaking countries such as the United Kingdom and the United States, a local variety of English continues to be used and represents a language in the process of evolution”. This includes English in Malaysia which, some 30 years ago, might simply be known as ‘English’, instead of Malaysian English. In order to understand the emergence of ‘Malaysian English’, a knowledge of the historical as well as socio-linguistic background of English in the country is crucial. The review of literature, therefore, is accordingly done on the conceptual issues, framework, studies, views, and arguments concerning the emergence of language standardization and New Englishes, as well as the background and features of ME itself.

2.1 BACKGROUND OF ENGLISH IN MALAYSIA

According to Asmah (1997:13), “in tandem with its image as the language of power, English, from the beginning of its introduction, was a medium of instruction first taught by the colonial government through its education office to sons of the Malay rulers, starting with the scions of the Selangor royal household”. Later on in the 1920’s, an English boarding school for the sons of the Malay rulers and those of noble birth was established in the royal town of

Kuala Kangsar. Asmah (1997:13) adds that “this school, the Malay College, Kuala Kangsar (better known as MCKK), was to be the mainspring of the growth and development of an English speaking Malay intelligentsia”. The birth of the Malay Girl’s College (MGC) in 1947, later known as Tunku Kursiah College (TKC), came as a result of the British colonial government’s realization of the need for the building of a sister school to MCKK.

It was the motivation to be higher up the social ladder that led people to struggle to enter the English medium schools. The rise of nationalism which led to the independence of Malaya in 1957 brought with it the importance of Malay as an element of national identity. However, even at the height of nationalism English was given a role to play, that of official language until ten years after Independence, and after having fulfilled this role, it was to become Malaysia’s second language. In Peninsular Malaysia, the official status of English (used in government offices and official ceremonies) ceased after 31st August 1967, in Sabah after 1973 and in Sarawak after September 1985 (Asmah Hj Omar, 1997). In response to the call for nationalism, English medium schools were later replaced with national schools in which the national language was used as the main medium of instruction and English was taught as a second language.

Schneider in Baskaran (2005: ix) states that “Malaysia is a country with a rich cultural heritage and, as a consequence, a remarkable ethno-linguistic diversity”. In this concerto of languages, English has come to play an important part, even when its status seemed endangered for a while by the rise of nationalism as pointed out by Asmah (1997), and still under dispute. Since the 1960’s, when English was gradually replaced by bahasa Malaysia as the language of instruction in the educational system, Malaysia has been counted as a model case of a country pursuing a nationalist language policy. As stated further by Schneider in

Baskaran (2005: ix), “the pendulum has been swinging back somewhat since the 1990’s, a process culminating in the re-introduction of English as the language of instruction in mathematics and science in 2003”. This is in line with the decision taken by the cabinet to allow English to be used as the medium of instruction in the field of engineering, medicine, science and other technical subjects in institutions of higher learning. According to Morais (2001:34), “the decision was taken to enable students to keep abreast of rapidly expanding developments in these fields and to help Malaysia become the centre of academic excellence”. Following its increasing importance in higher institutions, the role of English as the second most important language in Malaysia is subsequently enhanced in recent years, not only in the educational system (i.e. using English in Mathematics and Science subjects in school since 2003), but also other domains: the mass media, international business and communication.

Baskaran (2005:18) states that “with almost two centuries of nurturing and over four decades of nursing, the English language in Malaysia has developed to become a typical progeny of the New Englishes”. This statement could serve as an overview of the development and role of English in Malaysia. Two centuries, as she puts it, indicate the period of English language currency in Malaysia and four decades represent (a) the time span during which English in Malaysia was officially ascribed secondary status (1965 to 2005) during which time its official role has changed, and (b) the approximate period of time during which most recent issues in the identification and recognition of the New Englishes have been vehemently debated (p.18).

2.2 NEW VARIETIES OF ENGLISH: MODELS OF CONCENTRIC CIRCLES

In order to justify the claim that ME has developed to become “a typical progeny of the New Englishes” (Baskaran, 2005:18), the establishment of the notion of World Englishes and issues revolving it ought to be understood. Hence the need to review the literature on the emergence of some models of concentric circles that are used to illustrate how the varieties of English differ from or relate to one another.

2.2.1 Kachru’s Model of Concentric Circles

According to Bruthiaux (2003), for the best part of the last two decades, commentators on English worldwide have taken their theoretical premise the model consisting of three concentric circles originally proposed by Braj Kachru (1984, 1985, 1989). This model is formulated to further clarify the “present-day diversity within the English language complex” (McArthur, 1998:95). It is “a set of three contiguous ovals rising one above the other out of smaller unlabelled ovals belonging presumably to the past” (McArthur, 1998:97).

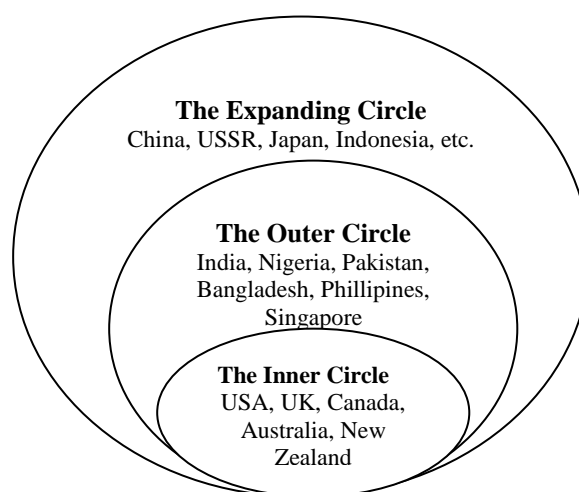


Figure 1: Kachru’s Model of Concentric Circles

As shown in Figure 1, the first oval which is called the “Inner Circle” comprises locations where English is the language of a substantial, often monolingual majority (e.g. USA, UK, Ireland, Australia, etc.). The “Outer Circle”, the second oval, represents “locations that typically came under British or American colonial administration before gaining independence and where English continues to be used for inter-ethnic communication and a dominant language by those at the top of socioeconomic ladder” (Bruthiaux, 2003:160). The communities in these countries range in size and geopolitical importance from India to Nauru through Nigeria, Kenya, Fiji, the Phillipines, Singapore, Malaysia and many more.

Finally, the “Expanding Circle” consists of countries in which English is used as a foreign language: Japan, China, Belgium, France, etc. This circle, according to Bruthiaux (2003:160), “represents societies where English is not passed on to infants naturally across generations but is taught in schools to an increasingly number of learners and is used – by some, at least – in activities involving members of other linguistic local communities and in international trade or tourism”. He adds that English in these locations tends to be exonormative, in that speakers, educators, and policy makers have traditionally looked to American or British models for linguistic norms.

Kachru’s taxonomy, as suggested by Bruthiaux (2003), significantly raises the awareness that there are varieties of English growing dynamically based on the increasing population of speakers as well as the role of the media, literature and popular cultures. Nonetheless, this model is not without criticism. Bruthiaux (2003:161) argues that “because it is descriptively and analytically inconsistent as well as over-representative of a political agenda, the model has little explanatory power and makes only a minor contribution to making sense of the

current configuration of English worldwide”. The sense of segregation that is the heart of the “circles” metaphor, he further claims, is counterproductive for two reasons:

- (i) Any attempt to make a model predict types of English on the basis of little more than geography will lead to oversimplification, as in the temptation to identify nascent varieties of English in locations of the Expanding type where the language is studied but barely spoken.
- (ii) Persisting with the Three Circles model makes it less likely that all manifestations of English wherever they occur will eventually be seen as qualitatively comparable and equally valid.

(Bruthiaux, 2003: 175)

The model is also at fault in that “it makes no reference to proficiency and does not attempt to differentiate between degrees of communicative competence: variation in proficiency in the Expanding Circle locations ranges from native-like ability in a few to the kind of receptive , test-oriented knowledge promoted through schooling, with many knowing no English at all” (Bruthiaux, 2003:169).

This vast and unanalyzed variation in proficiency across the circles leads to unverifiable claims regarding how many users may be said to belong to each circle. Estimates offered by Crystal (1997) and reproduced by Graddol (1997) in Bruthiaux (2003) suggest a relatively narrow range for the Inner Circle (320 – 380 million). However, ranges for the Outer Circle (150 – 300 million) and especially the Expanding Circle (100 million to 1 billion) are so broad as to be largely meaningless. Not only will the figures be changing across time with the expansion of World Englishes, but there is also no clear indication of the varieties within the circles in terms of proficiency and dialectal ranges.

Reflecting on the above review, the Three Circles model has undoubtedly given us a convenient shorthand for labeling contexts of English worldwide, and Kachru's contribution in raising the concept of World Englishes is invaluable in the field of linguistics. Nonetheless, the author proposes Bruthiaux (2003)'s view that the created categories have also had the side-effect of limiting the content of these categories and of encouraging the notion that Englishes are Englishes (labeling varieties of English on the basis of largely non-linguistic factors such as colonial and political boundaries), regardless of circle. The fact is, there is also variation of key features within each variety that needs to be looked at. The key features, as cited by Bruthiaux (2003), include the dialectal range in Inner locations, proficiency range in Outer locations, or severely limited functional range in expanding locations. It is this type of variation that an alternative model must attempt to represent.

2.2.2 Yano's Modification of Kachru's Model

One of the linguists who proposes such alternative is Yasukata Yano (2001). He responds to the limitation of Kachru's Three Circles, making the claim that as the number of second language speakers of English comes to exceed that of native speakers, the centre of authority regarding linguistic norms and practices will shift from the latter to the former, as if geopolitical and economic factors did not matter. He thus anticipates a minor modification of the Kachruvian Model due to two key factors: "the varieties of English in the Outer Circle (ESL) have become increasingly established (and that) the concept of the Inner Circle (ENL) itself may become questionable because of continued inflow of immigrants and increase of foreign residents" (Yano, 2001:122). He also expresses his belief that people with native speaker's intuition are the ones who are able to generate grammatical and appropriate

linguistic forms in a given situation and make judgments on the grammaticality and acceptability of linguistic forms. Thus the margin linking the Inner Circle and the Outer Circle, in Yano's point of view, will eventually become more unclear and hence less significant, although that connecting the outer circle and the expanding circle will continue to be as distinct as it is presently. This is reflected in his modified version of the Kachruvian Model (Figure 2), in which "a dotted line is used instead of a solid line for the circle between the inner and outer spaces, indicating that it is less clear and will eventually disappear" (Yano, 2001:122).

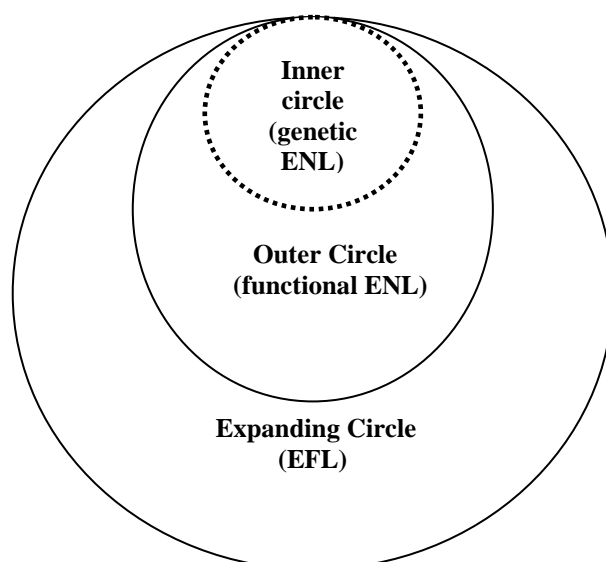


Figure 2: Yano's modification of Kachruvian's Circles

Reflecting on Yano's modification of the concentric circles, the author is of the view that it is rather too ambitious to achieve what Yano claims (i.e. the number of second language speakers exceeding first language speakers and the dotted lines being disappeared). As foreseen by the author, the dotted lines will stay for a long time (if not forever) as although the Englishes of the Outer Circle continues gaining prominence, the Englishes of the Inner Circle, too, will remain strong as a standard point of reference in ESL education, international

trade and communication as well as popular culture (movies, songs, Internet, etc), due to the essentiality of global intelligibility.

2.2.3 Ooi's Model of Concentric Circles

If Yano's (2001) modification of the Three Circles particularly concerns on the flow and number of speakers that cause the blurring of the distinctive line between the Kachruvian circles, Vincent Ooi's (2001) model is more linguistic specific in his categorizations of English as used in the Outer settings: Singapore and Malaysia. Unlike the earlier models discussed, Ooi's model does not aim to categorize Englishes of the world but to distinguish the varieties within a variety of English itself. Focusing on the nativized linguistic features instead of historical-geographical factors, his model of concentric circles (Figure 3) is widely referred to in the categorization of the Singapore-Malaysia English (SME) lexical items.

On the whole, Kachru's, Yano's and Ooi's models of concentric circles, as reviewed, have given the author a greater insight into how varieties of English are defined and grouped based on specific criteria. Though differences may be seen in terms of the characteristics of categorization, all the models established the fact that varieties do exist across the English speaking world and that they are expanding. ME, being one of the growing varieties of English in the outer circle, has undoubtedly established a variety within itself due to its unique linguistic features (one of which is the lexical items as categorized by Ooi). This conceptual belief has become the motivational drive for this particular study.

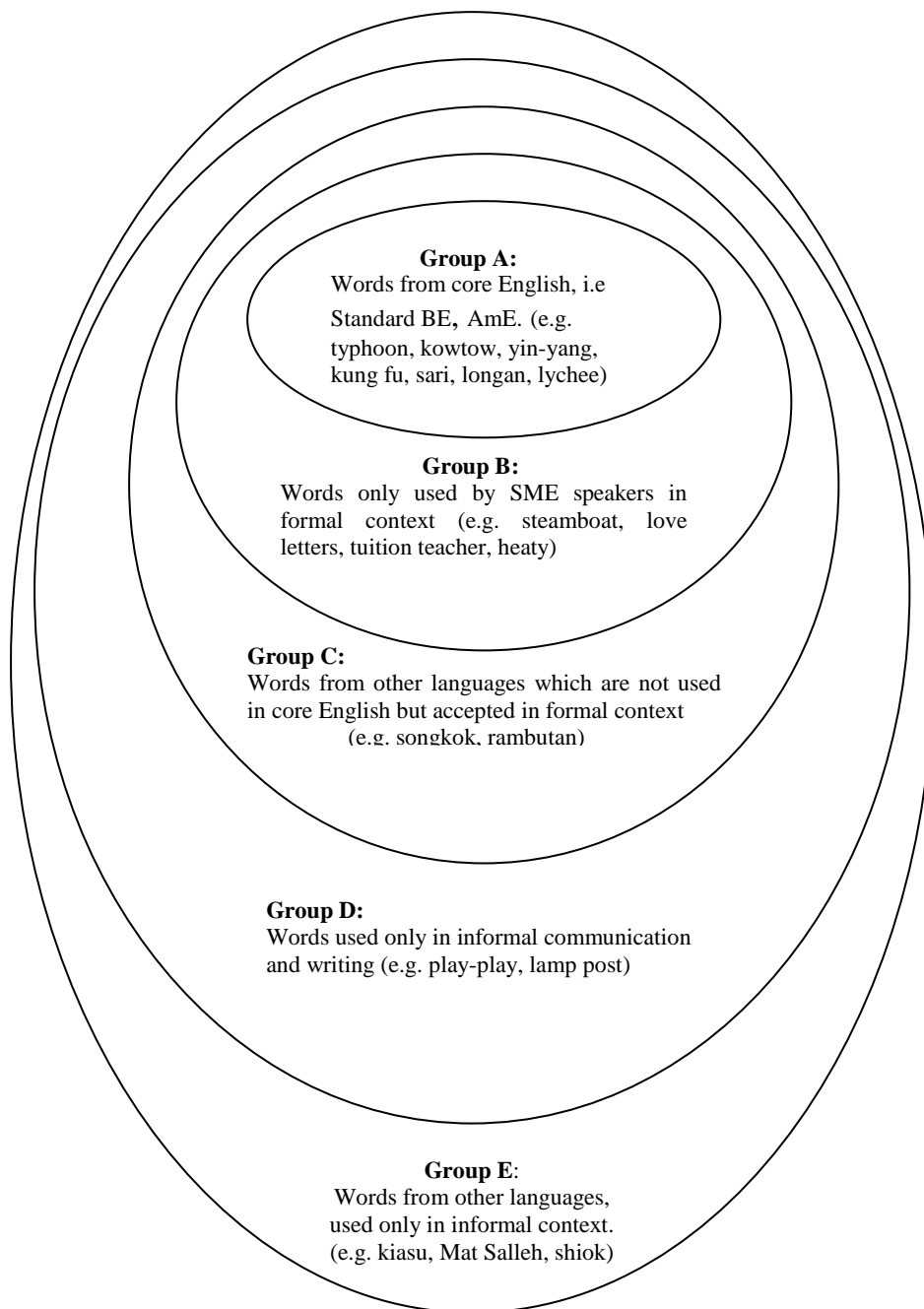


Figure 3: Ooi's (2001) Concentric Circles

2.3 STANDARD ENGLISH: CONCEPTS AND ISSUES

As asserted earlier, the study does not attempt to label ME or any variety in terms of its ‘standardness’ or ‘non-standardness’. This, in fact, is not necessary to answer the research questions of the study. Nonetheless, being an ESL educator, the author believes that an understanding of the concept of ‘standardization’ and related issues is of great significance when implications of ME on English language teaching (ELT) are concerned. The views of ‘standard’ and ‘standardization’ of the English language in the part of the policy makers and educators are crucial for the pedagogical implications. These aspects are to be discussed in the conclusive chapter, hence the need to review relevant literature concerning the conceptualization and issues of Standardization.

According to Trudgill (1999), there is a reasonably clear consensus in the sociolinguistics literature about the term *standardised language*: a standardised language is a language one of whose varieties has undergone standardisation. *Standardisation*, too, appears to be a relatively uncontroversial term, although the terminology employed in the discussion of this topic is by no means uniform. Trudgill (1992) himself defines standardization as consisting of the processes of language determination, codification and stabilization. Language determination “refers to decisions which have to be taken concerning the selection of particular languages or varieties of language for particular purposes in the society or nation in question” (p.71). Codification is the process whereby a language variety “acquires a publicly recognized and fixed form” and the results of codification “are usually enshrined in dictionaries and grammar books” (p.71). Stabilization is a process whereby a formerly diffuse variety “undergoes focusing and takes on a more fixed and stable form” (p.70).

Trudgill (1999) adds that it is therefore somewhat surprising that there seems to be considerable confusion in the English-speaking world, even amongst linguists, about what *Standard English* is. One would think that it should be reasonably clear which of the varieties of English is the one which has been subject to the process of standardization, and what its characteristics are. In fact, however, we do not even seem to be able to agree how to spell this term - with an upper case or lower case <s>.

The definition of what Standard English is thus meant to be subjective. Languages, Crystal (1997) emphasizes, are not static objects, but fluctuate according to several variables. Therefore Standard English is often considered the set of correct pronunciation, grammatical, and lexical choices. In this case the attribute “standard” means that it encompasses the widest range of options because it has been forged to fit almost any communicative situation. Standard English is commonly regarded as the most efficient and convenient variety for any occasion. Crystal (1997) added that this linguistic object corresponds more or less to the variety which is taught and learnt at school and used by intellectuals (e.g. writers and TV speakers).

Some questions necessarily arise from these reflections: Are regional variations acceptable? Is there a variety which is “more standard” than the others? The criterion used to verify whether two varieties are the same language or not is the mutual intelligibility of their speakers. Hence, are phonological, grammatical, and lexical variations of no consequence provided that people understand each other?

In view of ME, the issues of intelligibility and acceptability have been receiving continuous responses by linguists. Stressing that it is extremely difficult to draw the line as to where

acceptability begins and ends, Gaudart (1997) gathers that, over the years, we have acquired certain 'usage' which we think is standard but which may not be intelligible to non-Malaysians: "The problem lies in deciding when acceptability begins. Do we consider deviations as errors, or simply Malaysian English? When are we merely using the idea of ME as an excuse for lack of knowledge?" (Gaudart, 1997:52). If the issue here is 'errors', then in view of Kachru's notion of World Englishes, a distinction between mistakes and deviations would have to be made. This is not a simple, straightforward matter, especially when one has to deal with criteria for language use in both international and intranational contexts (the variety of language as used locally or within the context of a particular society/nation).

According to Kachru (1982), a mistake is a linguistic manifestation or innovation that is (i) not acceptable to a native speech community, and (ii) not acceptable to a nativized speech community. Deviations, on the other hand are variants that are permissible. Kachru argues that both criteria (i) and (ii) must be met for a particular linguistic feature or innovation to be deemed a mistake or not a mere deviation. Proposing Kachru's view, Samuel (1997) states that the mistake-deviation distinction is invariably also a socio-psychological matter, defined by a speech community's intuitive sense of what is permissible and allowable in a particular context.

Habibah (1997) is of the view that the issue is not all about the acceptance (of the unique variety), but also whether the communication objective or effect of the speech is successfully achieved in the particular situations involved, and whether the variety can be deciphered by the listeners. Therefore, speakers of ME should be aware of the differences between ME and Standard English and the communicative functions of each in various domains. This is crucial

so that the varieties will be used appropriately based on the situations and those involved in the encounter.

Indeed, the issue of “standard” can never be put into the backseat when ESL education is concerned, and this viewpoint is supported by Samuel (1997):

“Issues of delineating standards of usage or of counterbalancing linguistic innovation with linguistic convention make the task of teaching English all the more complex and contentious. Like the two faces of Janus, looking inwards and outwards simultaneously, learners (and teachers) of English are sometimes faced with a dilemma: how can they make their language work for themselves as well as others.”

(Samuel, 1997: 33)

The author proposes the view that Standard English is not an absolute norm. As stated by Gupta (1993) in her homepage (<http://www.leeds.ac.uk/english/staff/afg/antheab.html>), “although there are features which are definitely standard or non-standard, it is not entirely bipolar. Orthography and number concord are used to illustrate how standardness may be scalar. While some spellings and some types of concord can definitely be seen as non-standard, others are less stigmatized, or involve choices between standard alternatives”. Teachers and editors, as Gupta subsequently suggests, need to be alerted to central areas of standardness as identifying sentences which are in the greatest need of correction. After all, as far as the author is concerned, there has been no statement indicating that the aim of ELT in Malaysia is to produce a native-like speaker of English (defining ‘native’ is another issue

but for the purpose of this argument it is best referred to the native speakers of SBE). In fact, as pointed out by Baskaran (2005), the level that is aimed at in the pedagogical domain as a prescriptive norm in language instruction is a form of ME – the acrolectal form. This, she claims, “is not native in that it allows for some indigenized phonological and lexical features, but near native in so far as the syntactic features still hold” (Baskaran, 2005:19). The KBSR syllabus (1977) is cited to support her statement:

“Our aim of international intelligibility does not imply that our pupils should speak exactly like Englishmen. There would not be sufficient time to achieve this nor is it necessary. What is aimed at is that they should be able to speak with acceptable rhythm and stress, and to produce the sounds of English sufficiently well for a listener to be able to distinguish between similar words.”

(Baskaran, 2005: 20)

In short, the author is of the view that the concept of Standard English would remain subjective as long as more varieties of English are being globally established and expanded under the notion of World Englishes. However, as much as one wishes to claim the “standardness” of one’s own variety, there is indeed a need for one point of reference from the Inner Circles (i.e SBE, for the purpose of this study) so as to ensure global intelligibility and to be contextually appropriate, both of which are crucial aspects in the English language education in Malaysia.

2.4 FEATURES OF MALAYSIAN ENGLISH

For almost thirty years, a number of books and articles on Singapore English (SE, henceforth) and ME have been written. Amongst the pioneers, as stated in Gonzalez (1997) are Wong (1982) for ME, Tay (1982) for SE, and Platt and Weber (1980) who are more empirical in their description of English in Singapore and Malaysia, using frequency counts and percentages within a defined sample. Descriptions at that time mainly considered the two as one variety. This is understandable, as pointed out by Gupta (1998), despite demographic and political differences in the role and distribution of English, there remain varieties of ME that are virtually identical to their parallels in Singapore. Acknowledging that there are certain features of SE described in the literature that can similarly be useful for the explanation of ME features, some ME features that share common characteristics with SE are referred to. To name a few, these features include the use of particles ‘lah’, ‘ah’, and the ‘nativized’ rule of syntax that includes oversimplified structure involving omission of auxiliary verbs and pronouns, restructuralization of interrogatives, etc. These are further reviewed and analyzed in Chapter 4.

Baskaran (2005:23) as stated in Chapter 1, is of the view that “previous works on ME have not given full impetus on the structural features although it is in this very sphere that the most significant differences make ME what it actually is”. Subsequently, Baskaran (2005) has particularly focused on the analysis of ME structural features in her book ‘A Malaysian English Primer: Aspects of Malaysian English Features’. Analyzing ME features from various sources of data, she has outlined the structural, phonological, lexical as well as syntactical characteristics of ME. For the purpose of this study, the scope of analysis is

narrowed down to lexical and syntactic features based on certain characteristics as outlined by Baskaran (2005: 37-49, 141-161) and edited in Table 1.

LEXICAL FEATURES	
Local language referents (use of local lexicon in ME speech):	Standard English Lexicalisation (English lexemes with ME usage)
a. institutionalized concepts*	a. Polysemic variation
b. emotional and cultural loading	b. Semantic variation*
c. semantic restriction*	c. Informalisation
d. cultural/culinary terms	d. Formalisation*
e. hyponymous collocation*	e. Directional reversal*
f. campus/student coinages*	f. College colloquialism*
	g. Grammatical particles
SYNTACTIC FEATURES	
Clause Structure-Interrogative Clause Variation	
a. Non auxiliary be	
b. Word order in BM Wh-Interrogatives	
c. Copula Elipsis	
d. Absence of Operator 'do'	
e. Yes-No Interrogative Tags: or not, yes or not, enclitic 'ah'	
f. Wh-Imperatives: 'can or not' tag	
g. 'Isn't it', 'is it' tags	
h. Pronoun Ellipsis	
i. Substitution of there + be with the existential 'got'	

**Table 1: Characterization of ME lexical and syntactic features (edited)
(Baskaran: 2005)**

Although some features (marked *) are not found in the data, the review of these lexical and syntactic features as categorized by Baskaran (2005) has provided a significant basis for data presentation and analysis in Chapter 4. The applicable features are to be presented as sub-titles in the presentation of data and described within the analysis. In addition, ME

vocabulary can also be described morphologically based on the word formation processes involved. According to Baskaran (2005), among the most notable processes of word formation in ME are compounding and affixation. These processes, together with reduplication, repetition and conversion are discussed in describing some of the data in Chapter 4.

In terms on syntax, it has been observed that one of the characteristics of Singapore Colloquial English (SCE) that is also applied in ME is the omission of subject, where “the grammatical subject of a finite clause can be omitted so long as it is retrievable from the context” (Gupta 1994: 10-11). The definition of context, however, needs to be clarified. Leong Pin (2003) proposes that the need for such clarification is important since context can be interpreted in at least two ways. The first refers to the textual environment - the surrounding words or clauses – within which the element in question is located. This is termed linguistic context, or simply co-text. The second, situational context, refers to the ‘non-linguistic background to a text or utterance’ (Crystal 1997:88).

Thus, in an attempt to explain the absence of subjects in ME utterances, some level of discourse setting should be discussed involving the effects of both situational context and co-text of each causal element. According to Firbas (1996:221), causal elements possess varying degrees of communicative dynamism (CD), defined as ‘the relative extent to which the unit contributes towards the development of the communication within the communicative field’. Each clause is divisible into its constituent elements, with each element carrying a certain degree of CD. Elements with a low degree of CD are labeled *theme* and such elements perform the key function of laying the foundation for the discourse to proceed. The other

non-theme elements comprise two separate components – *rheme* and *transition*. While rhemes bear the highest degrees of CD, transitions mediate between theme and non-theme, carrying the lowest degree of CD within the non-theme. This framework as applied in the data is further described in Chapter 4.

2.5 MALAYSIAN ENGLISH: THE LECTAL CONTINUUM

Malaysian English has been defined subjectively by the general public. It is used sometimes to refer exclusively to the colloquial and informal variety spoken by many Malaysians, or popularly known as ‘Manglish’. The fact that is generally overlooked is that there are varieties within ME itself. Thus, in view of linguistics, to abbreviate Malaysian English as Manglish would be an overgeneralization. Dewing (2005), in her article retrieved from <http://my-malaysia.info/manglish-british-malaysian.html>, emphasizes the importance of distinguishing the differences between Manglish, the form of street Malaysian English spoken by most Malaysians, and the English spoken by Malaysians speakers so-called ‘proper’ English. She states that while there are still certain peculiarities in the latter (especially in terms of intonation, accent and choice of words), proper ME is merely a normal variation in the way English is spoken and does not deviate significantly from ‘common’ (as she puts it) English, and it is intelligible to most English-speaking people around the world. Pure Manglish, she adds, can be likened to pidgin English, and it is usually barely understandable to most speakers of English, except Singaporeans who also speak a similar patois known as Singlish.

In the field of linguistics, this presence of sub-varieties within ME has earlier been distinguished by Platt and Webber (1980), and proposed by Baskaran (1994), stating that ME is actually a continuum that comprises at least three distinguishable sub-varieties: the acrolect, mesolect and basilect varieties. Later on, Baskaran (2005) takes another three-tiered approach to describing ME, this time using the terms Official ME (Standard ME), Unofficial ME (Dialectal ME) and Broken ME (Patois ME), as presented in Table 2. Also calling each of these sub-varieties as ‘Standard ME’, ‘Colloquial ME’ and ‘Broken ME’ respectively, Pillai and Fauziah (2006) describe the features of ME within the continuum as shown in Table 3.

	Official ME (STANDARD) (Spoken and Written) (Formal use) (International intelligibility)	Unofficial ME (DIALECTAL) (Spoken and Written) (Informal use) (National intelligibility)	Broken ME (PATOIS) (Spoken only) (Colloquial use) (Patois intelligibility and currency)
Syntax	No deviation tolerated at all	Some deviation is acceptable although it is not as stigmatized as broken English (intelligibility is still here)	Substantial variation/deviation (national intelligibility)
Lexis	Variation acceptable esp. for words not substitutable in an international context (or to give a more localized context)	Lexicalizations quite prevalent even for words having international English substitutes.	Major lexicalization – heavily infused with local language items.

Table 2: Sub-division of Malaysian English (edited) (Baskaran, 2005:22)

	Acrolect (Standard ME)	Mesolect (Colloquial)	Basilect (Broken)
SYNTAX	+ standard	-standard	Extremely simplified structures
LEXIS (VOCABULARY)	+localized lexical items accepted in formal and informal use	+localized lexical items, including those not used in more formal contexts	Pidgin-like
PHONOLOGY	Can be ± marked ethnically	Usually, but not necessarily +marked ethnic accent	Usually +marked ethnic accent

Table 3: Sub-varieties of Malaysian English (Pillai & Fauziah, 2006:48)

Besides being categorized in terms of formality (as in the discussed models of continuum and Ooi's concentric circles), lectal varieties of ME are also perceived as a result of the socio-economic and ethnic background of the speakers. As stated by Morais (1997:90), "the varieties of ME used by Malaysians at home, with friends, at school and at the workplace may be said to be indicators of their membership in different socio-economic and ethnic networks. Malay, Chinese and Indian members of the middle class have in their repertoire both the standard and the nativized varieties of ME". ME Type 1 (MEI) is described as a high variety, while ME Type II (MEII) a colloquial variety. MEI is generally used in formal interactions, while MEII is used by members of the white collar network in informal contexts (see Table 4).

SOCIO-ECONOMIC/ ETHNIC BACKGROUND	VARIETIES OF MALAYSIAN ENGLISH
Middle Class Malaysians (Malays/Chinese/Indians)	Standard Malaysian English (MEI, MEII)
Working Class Malaysians (Malays/Chinese/Indians)	Colloquial Variety (MEII)

Table 4: Categorization of ME varieties (Morais, 1997:90)

The model of lectal continuum, nonetheless, is not without criticism. One argument against the model of lectal continuum, according to Gupta (1998), is based upon the fact that its approach stresses on the non-nativeness of the other varieties (in this case, ME), entailing the analysis of the varieties along the continuum in terms of their deviance from Standard English, and linking linguistic features to educational level. In addition, Gupta (2005) stresses on the importance of using the categorizations of the lectal continuum appropriately:

“These terms should be used with care. They were developed (by Bickerton) for the post-creole continuum, and refer to a setting in which the acrolect is the highest prestige variety locally and the basilect (not ‘basolect’) is the least prestigious. There are significant grammatical differences between acrolect and basilect and speakers move along the scale depending on the social context (the more formal, the more acrolectal) and their own repertoire, which is linked to social class. A speaker who operates largely at the basilectal end in (say) Guyana is likely to be a monolingual native speaker of English, not someone who has learnt English as a second language”.

(Source: Gupta’s e-mail to the Consortium for Language Policy and Planning. Retrieved from <http://listserv.linguistlist.org/cgi-bin/wa?A2=ind0501&L=lgpolicy-list&P=12511>)

'Low-level competence', as further stated by Gupta (2005), is not the expression to use. Proposing this view, Hamo (in Gupta: 2005) states that there are both horizontal as well as vertical dimension within the continuum that ought to be distinguished:

"The horizontal dimension exists (within the continuum), because low-level competence in the English language becomes so mixed with competence in the local language or dialect that what results is only understandable -- not necessarily very useful -- to those speakers of the local dialect. Thus, in a large country there can be many basilectal varieties of the same second language. It is vertical in the sense that second language competence is used as a linguistic filter to rise through a nation's education system".

(Source: Gupta's e-mail to the Consortium for Language Policy and Planning. Retrieved from <http://listserv.linguistlist.org/cgi-bin/wa?A2=ind0501&L=lgpolicy-list&P=12511>)

As an alternative to the lectal continuum model, Gupta (1998) proposes the diglossia model. This involves a delimitation of a variety, Singapore Colloquial English (SCE), which is treated as having an autonomous syntax, linking linguistic features to context of use, emphasizing the nativeness of the variety and casting speakers in an active role. Reflecting on both models, it is not the attempt of the study to justify the effectiveness of any one particular model against the other. In fact, in all honesty, it cannot be seen how both can be separated in any attempt to describe the usage of ME. How can features of ME be best described if not according to their differences as compared to the standard variety? Can ME speakers be considered 'native' speakers of English in the first place to regard ME as an autonomous variety, following the diglossia model?

The diglossia model, one may argue, could be useful in describing the basilectal variety of ME as it deviates significantly from Standard English in many structural aspects. If speakers of SCE are seen as autonomous, speaking the variety as a sense of identity (not lack of proficiency), can speakers of basilectal ME be regarded as the same? SCE and ME are two distinct varieties based on the different geographical size, ethno-graphical population and language policies though sharing some similarities in their features. As much as we would like to establish the uniqueness of ME, English is not the nation's first language. It is the second language that is mostly learnt in school by a larger population of the nation, compared to the ones acquiring it right from infancy as the first language. Thus, apart from establishing the autonomous features of ME as proposed by the diglossia model, the speakers' level of proficiency and other socio-linguistic background should not be disregarded in describing the use of ME. In the context of ME, these two models (lectal continuum and diglossia) should be complimenting each other, especially if one has just started to accept the notion of ME as a variety of English. Even Gupta (1998:22) realizes this, stating that:

“I don't see that these two approaches must be in opposition. One focuses on native speakers, and on their style shift, while the other focuses on the behaviour of all speakers in a formal context. The diglossia approach does not lend itself very well to large scale quantitative research, to which the Platt school is committed. Surely both quantitative and non-quantitative approaches have a role?”

This study therefore takes into account both of these approaches in the data analysis. Besides describing the features of items in comparison to SBE, the analysis also considers some socio-linguistic factors of usage. Nevertheless, realizing the fact that even a lexical item could shift its paradigm along the line of the three types of ME continuum in the process of standardization (development of ME corpus and dictionaries), it is not the main aim of the

study to categorize the vocabulary (or the respondents) as *exclusively* acrolectal, mesolectal or basilectal. The shift in terms of formality is recognized by Ooi (2001: 179) in his study of Singapore-Malaysian English (SME). He reveals that some local or non-standard words from the communication may be observed to be shifting from a lower sociolect into a higher sociolect. The term ‘handphone’, for example, might have been regarded ‘colloquial’ but recently perceived as an acrolectal ME, if not standard ME, due to its wider acceptance of use in the country. It is now even listed by the *Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary* (2005). The categorization of the items based on the framework of the lectal continuum, therefore, would mainly serve to demonstrate the fact that both linguistic formation and socio-linguistic factors are significant in creating the sub-varieties of ME vocabulary along the continuum, contributing to one’s understanding of the nature of ME.

2.6 SUMMARY OF LITERATURE REVIEW

On the whole, the review of literature has given comprehensive insights concerning issues, concepts and models that are relevant to the study. The historical as well as educational background of English language in Malaysia provides the basis for the understanding of the usage and significance of English in the country. This knowledge is crucial in order to understand the growing notion of World Englishes and the consideration of ME as one of the varieties of English. In relation to the emergence of new varieties of English in the world as well as the varieties that occur within the varieties themselves, models of concentric circles are discussed. Issues concerning the concepts of language ‘standard’ and ‘standardization’ are subsequently reviewed. The understanding and reflection of these issues are crucial in discussing the implications of the study on the field of education and linguistics. In addition,

lexical and syntactic characteristics of ME established in previous studies using empirical data and related models are presented. The review on these aspects is imperative in order to achieve the purpose of study, that is to describe ME features based on the data, confirming the stable features of ME and thus enhancing the understanding of the nature of ME.