

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This study investigates the English lexicalization in blogs by examining the perceptions of teachers and students on which items taken from blogs are perceived as SBE, SME and NME. The types of contexts in terms of formality and informality the samples of English been encountered and used will be examined. This is to show the consistency between the variety of samples of English as being perceived and the contexts of encountering and usage in terms of formality and informality. This chapter describes and explains the research design, data collection, instrument, participants and theoretical framework.

3.1 Research Design

Mixed mode methodology which incorporated both qualitative and quantitative methods was adopted to obtain in-depth data. Meanwhile, two sets of data were collected in this study. The first source of data was blog entries which the researcher selected and analysed by adopting Menon's lexico-semantic categories. The samples of English resembling ME extracted from blogs were then became the content of questionnaire. In other words, the sample sentences in the questionnaire were basically data from the blogs.

The second source of data was the questionnaire which was used to complement the data analysis and aimed to reconfirm that the researcher's perception of the data

collected as ME is correct. Respondents were required to give their perceptions on the samples of English extracted from blogs.

3.2 Data Collection

In this study, the data collection procedure was divided into few stages to ensure the objectivity of the study. The researcher had decided to study the work written by Malaysians which may contain some features of Malaysian English; therefore the first step was the selection of blogs as data for the study. The researcher searched for the top 100 Malaysians' bloggers from the Internet and read through the blogs. Ten bloggers known to the researcher were selected randomly. Then, emails were sent to the bloggers to ask for their consent to have access to their data. The bloggers were informed the objectives of the study and how the language in their blogs will be utilised as samples to obtain responses from the respondents. The bloggers gave their consent by replying the emails.

After getting the consent, the second step was to study the items in the 14 categories of lexico-semantic by Menon (2003). The researcher wanted to know the similar examples or types of examples under the lexico-semantic categories. This was to ensure the researcher acquire more knowledge and be able to identify the similar examples of language which have similarities with the examples of Menon.

In step 3, the researcher read through the entries by the 10 bloggers and started to collect data from their blogs. The period of data collection was two months, from August to end of September 2010. All the blog entries by the 10 bloggers within those

two months were read and the samples of English resembling ME were selected. Oxford English Dictionary (OED) was used to verify whether or not they are SBE or they are non-standard. If the lexical items indicate meaning which differs from the dictionary, they may be considered as Malaysian English. If the lexical items indicate same meaning as in the Oxford English Dictionary, they may be considered as SBE. However, if the lexical items indicate same meaning with the dictionary but are different in terms of usage, they may be considered as ME. After checking with the dictionary, those examples resembling SBE were eliminated.

Subsequently, the researcher studied the samples that are similar to the examples in Menon's (2003) study. During this step, the researcher identified those samples which are resemble of ME and tried to fit them into the 14 categories of lexico-semantic by Menon (2003). However, those samples could only fit into nine categories, namely:

1. Lexico-semantic Reduplication
2. Lexico – semantic Redundancy
3. Lexico-semantic substitution
4. Semantic Shift
5. Semantic Extension
6. Semantic Transfer from Mother Tongue
7. Local Compound Coinage
8. Ellipsis
9. Derivational Variation

Each category contains more than 10 sample sentences. Subsequently, the researcher eliminated the weaker samples which the usage of ME was more dubious. At the end,

five sentences were selected from each category to be the samples in the questionnaire. Due to the categorization of data from first source or blog were solely based on the researcher's perception, the second source of data namely questionnaire was designed to add the reliability of the first source of data. The researcher itemised all the samples resembling ME and compiled them to be part of the data in questionnaire. Under each sample, there were a few questions to seek for the respondents' opinion. Participants were required to give their perceptions on the variety, the possible SBE equivalent as well as context of encountering and usage of those samples.

In step five, 40 questionnaires were distributed to 20 ESL teachers and 20 ESL postgraduate students. However, some questionnaires were sent through emails. Each respondents were given a day so that they have sufficient time to complete the questionnaire. The questionnaire served as an instrument to obtain data from the respondents to reconfirm whether the perception of the researcher on the sample of English being ME was correct.

3.3 Research Instrument

First round of selection and categorization of samples from blogs was by the researcher. The questionnaire is chosen as instrument because of two main reasons. Firstly, there are 45 samples in the questionnaire and each sample contains four questions that ask for written opinions and perceptions from the respondents. The questionnaire enables wide range of information to be collected from a big number of respondents. Secondly, the busy teaching hours of the 20 teachers and may not be convenient for the researcher to make appointment with them and to interview them. Besides, the responses from the

teacher's will be compared to the postgraduates. Hence, the written responses are easier to achieve this objective.

The questionnaire was well-designed with multiple choices and open-ended questions (refer to Appendix A). Generally, the questionnaire was divided into two sections. The first section was to elicit the respondent's profile such as gender, age and courses of the students. The second part of questionnaire was intended to examine respondents' perceptions towards the samples of English extracted from 10 blogs. Moreover, respondents are required to provide their own experience of encountering as well as usage of the samples.

There are nine categories in the questionnaire and five questions in each category. In each question, a sample taken from the blog was given and certain words or expressions were underlined. First, the respondents were asked to determine the variety of English in the underlined word or expression, whether it is SBE, SME or NME. After that, respondents were required to provide the possible SBE equivalent of the words or expressions underlined.

Then, they were required to provide their personal experience of their encountering and usage of the samples. They were asked if they have encountered those words or expressions underlined. If yes, they were required to enlighten whether it was the formal or informal context they maybe have encountered. Following that was their personal usage of those words or expressions underlined. If they have used them, they were required to enlighten in which context they used, as in formal and informal situations.

In the questionnaire, there were remarks explaining the formal and informal contexts. Formal contexts refer to situations such as law court, conferences and seminars, meetings and presentations. On the other hand, informal contexts refer to more casual situations which may include conversation with friends and family, out of classroom, on the street or blogs and Internet chat. The situations for formal and informal contexts were explained to the respondents in the questionnaire.

3.4 Participants

There were one group of participant and one group of respondent involved in this study. The first group was ten Malaysian Bloggers aged 18 – 30. This group of participant is the writer or owners of the ten blogs which is also the first source of data. The second group is the 20 ESL teachers and 20 postgraduate students. This group of discerning ESL speakers was selected because they have better knowledge in English.

The ten Malaysian bloggers of Chinese ethnicity were informed that their blogs will be studied and be part of the data. They were experienced bloggers who have a great number of readers and started writing blogs few years ago. They were 6 females and 4 males' bloggers. The numbers of male and female bloggers were not even because the researcher found that there are more female bloggers than male bloggers.

The majority of this group of participants are from the English speaking family where English is their mother tongue. They converse in English fluently and use English every day. Their proficiency of English is of high or satisfactory level. Most of them have pursued their tertiary education while only 2 of them are pursuing their degree currently.

Furthermore, most of them had pursued their degree in English as Native language (ENL) countries such as US, UK and Australia.

The respondents were 20 ESL teachers and 20 ESL postgraduate students from UM. This group of discerning ESL speakers was selected because they are the advanced speakers of English who have high proficiency of English. With their knowledge in English and in Linguistics, their responses are believed to add more reliability and credibility to the results. They have better understanding of what constitute SBE, SME and NME. They are said to be eligible to determine the standards of English usage by the 10 bloggers. Therefore, their responses are important to support and reconfirm the researcher's perceptions on the variety of samples as being perceived as ME. Although these two groups are from ESL background and possesses English and Linguistics knowledge, their perception on Malaysian English might vary due to some factors. Therefore, this study will study their perceptions collectively in terms of identifying the variety of the samples and their contexts of usage.

While all the 20 ESL teachers or lecturers have different years of experience in teaching English, but their mutual goal is to teach Standard English for academic purposes. Somehow, they may have greater awareness on the variety of English used and able to identify the incorrectness of the samples if they were any. In contrast, the 20 ESL students who have pursued their degree in TESL, English or Linguistics have ample knowledge in English and eligible to give their responses in this study. Meanwhile, they are the younger group where they have more contact with the Internet and blogs compared to ESL teachers as most of them read blogs and have their own blogs.

3.5 The Conceptual Framework

Menon (2003) has developed a framework of 13 lexical categories which constituted combinations and adaptations of earlier categories by other researchers. This study employs Menon's framework in categorizing and analysing the data. First, the researcher searched for samples of English resembling ME from the ten selected blogs. Then those samples were collected and categorised into Menon's (2003) framework of 13 lexical-semantic categories. However, the researcher found that the samples of English extracted only fit into nine categories of Menon's framework.

Oxford English Dictionary (OED) was used to verify the usage of that standard British equivalent of samples selected to reconfirm whether or not they are SBE lexical items. Subsequently, the data collected was itemised and compiled to be questionnaire to obtain responses from ESL teachers and students. The responses from questionnaire aimed to verify whether or not the researcher's perception on the sample collected from blogs as ME was correct.

Data from the questionnaire were then analyzed quantitatively and qualitatively in terms of percentages to differences or similarities in the 20 ESL teachers and postgraduates' perception of the variety of samples and the context of encountering and usage. Their responses towards the ME lexis were illustrated in three tables. (see table 4.1 a, b, c).