# CHAPTER ONE

# INTRODUCTION

## 1.0 Background of the Study

English is essentially used as a lingua franca which bridges different people from different countries in intranational and international communication. This suggests that more people of different linguistic background and nationalities other than L1 users of English or commonly known as native speakers, are using English as a means of communication. In fact, Crystal (2003) reported an estimation of 430 million L2 users, an amount surpassing the estimated 330 million L1 users of English. This figure significantly marks a new challenge to the traditional views concerning intelligibility.

Traditionally, deviations of English varieties from the so-called standard English were viewed as deficit and unacceptable. This notion is clearly shown in debates on legitimization of English used by native and non-native speakers such as that between Quirk (1990) and Kachru (1991) (cited in Seidholfer, 2003). In his article, Quirk (1990) pinpointed that non-native Englishes are deficit and 'non-standard', judging by the deviations of non-native Englishes from the native standards. Claiming that non-native speakers of English have little or no prior knowledge of the culture that comes with native English language, Quirk went as far as describing them as 'half-baked quackery' (1990, p.9).

In response, Kachru (1991) criticized Quirk's (1990) approach, arguing that it is based on false assumptions. Kachru (1991) went on to note that it was time to acknowledge a 'paradigm shift' with the increasing use of English in international communication as well as the rapid growth in the number of non-native English speakers surpassing the

amount of native speakers as illustrated by Crystal (2003). As such, it is clear that the new idea challenging the traditional perspective of rigidly following a single standard set by the native speakers of English is to be brought to the centre of discussion and investigated, especially issues pertaining intelligibility.

With the focus now turned to English as an International Language (EIL), we see the emergence of new Englishes to which there is an expansion of linguistic features, uniquely representative of their own, respective nationalities and culture. These nationally and culturally marked linguistic features are often reflected in various forms, may it be phonetically, phonologically, morphologically, syntactically or semantically represented. Such expansion or even changes of linguistic features take into account local needs and functions of the people which have resulted in the nativization of the English language or, as explained by Saghal (1991), the process of localization of a new language. The question, however, remains whether a nativised English, which is so culturally-loaded, should be brought into an international interaction without affecting the intelligibility and comprehensibility of the entire discourse.

In the context of multiracial countries such as Malaysia, variations of English found might be more complicated than it seems. Besides regional differences, English in Malaysia varies according to influences from the respective local culture and languages. For instance, English spoken by a local Chinese, to a certain extent, may be slightly different from English spoken by a local Indian or Malay. This is especially conspicuous lexically, if not syntactically or phonetically, such as the use of borrowed words or code-switches in the speech of each race.

As pointed out by Ahmad Mahir and Silahudin Jarjis (2007), there is a sub-variety in the big umbrella of Malaysian English, namely the Malay Malaysian English (i.e. spoken

English of a Malaysian Malay) which can also be further divided into regional influences that can be seen clearly through the emergence of different sub-varieties such as Kelantanese English, Kedahan English and Perakian English. The identification of such a sub-variety such as the Malay Malaysian English suggests that the English used by Malaysians is slightly different between the ethnic groups with the Malays using a slightly different form of English from that of the Indians and Chinese. Similarly, the English used by the Indians and Chinese is also influenced by the dialects of their own mother tongue.

Nevertheless, despite the dialectal variations, comprehensibility among the different ethnic groups does not seem to be in any way affected (Ahmad Mahir and Silahudin Jarjis, 2007). The most possible explanation for this could be either that each fellow Malaysians have a certain level of understanding and knowledge of the culture and mother tongue of the other races or that the speaker involved selectively uses the form of English understood by all ethnic groups while engaged in an interethnic communication. With much food for thought on this peculiar phenomenon, it would be interesting to ponder if the slight differences in the English used by the different ethnic groups will hinder intelligibility should it be used in an international domain.

While it is understood that the English used by each ethnic group has its dialectal influence, it is not to say that it is exclusive of influences from the languages of other races. Just as the Chinese and Indians use lexical borrowings from the Malay language in their English discourse (e.g. the use of particle “lah” and “kan”), Malays are also occasionally found to use the form of English identified in the speech of another ethnic group (e.g. the use of particle “meh”, a dialectal feature of the English used by Malaysian Chinese). It must be noted though, that while the English used by each ethnic group shows features of inter-ethnic influences, it is still very likely that the English used by them, most of the time,

portrays more influences from their own culture and mother tongue than from other culture and languages. Hence, in this study, the role of each respective culture will be taken into account in order to investigate the possible influences of culture on intelligibility.

On the other hand, linguists such as Seidlhofer (2001a, 2001b), Jenner (1997) and Jenkins (1998, 2000 and 2002) believe that retaining intelligibility of different variants of Englishes in an international communication is possible as long as the linguistic variants used match the set of core features identified by the researchers. Nonetheless, there are still a few unanswered doubts that are yet to be explored such as the questionable guaranteed intelligibility by mere conformation to the core features, the threshold one has to attain for an intelligible discourse as well as the core variables that are still attributive to misunderstandings regardless of the use of contextualisation in filling culturally-loaded linguistic gaps. Perhaps it is still too early to have an answer to these under-researched issues until more studies are done.

### 1.1 Problem Statement

While nativised Englishes in countries such as China and India solely represent the Chinese and Indian languages and cultures, nativisation of Englishes in countries such as Singapore and Malaysia illustrate a relatively complex influence of different languages and ethnic cultures (Pillai, S., 2008a, p.43). In other words, if a nativised English in China is linguistically influenced by the Chinese language and culture, then a nativised English in Malaysia is in an intricate system adopting the linguistic features and functions of several ethnic cultures and languages. Given this complexity of influences from multiple ethnic groups and languages in Malaysia, one wonders if nativisation of English with influences

from Malay, Mandarin and Tamil as well as their respective cultures would have greater implications on the intelligibility of international interactions.

As reviewed by several researchers (Hashim, 2002; Rajandran, 2011; Ahmad Mahir and Silahudin Jarjis, 2007; Thirusanku and Md. Yunus, 2012), the concept of Malaysian English looks at a nativised English in Malaysia as a variety projecting a single identity- a national identity. However, a study by Deterding and Poedjosoedarmo (2000) discovers that English in Malaysia and Singapore may also be portraying linguistic features that mark the ethnic identity of its speakers. Assuming that the English used by the different ethnic groups in Malaysia are projecting linguistic features of their own mother tongue, there is a possibility that the nativised English by a local Chinese is similar to that of the English used by a Chinese from Mainland China. There will be certain structures of English (e.g. topicalisation, null topic) or culturally-loaded lexical items (e.g. angmoh) that are shared by both communities (Xu, L. J., and Langendoen, D. T., 1985; Wang, Q., Best, C. T., and Levitt, A.,1992). There is, nevertheless, a lack of empirical study investigating the relationship between these shared variables and intelligibility. Hence, one of the aims of this study is to explore the potential effects of ethnically nativised English in Malaysia on intelligibility.

Echoing this concept, Deterding and Pedjosoedarmo (2000) as well as Ahmad Mahir and Silahudin Jarjis (2007) also recognize the existence of cultural influence which has brought about variations of English used between the different ethnic groups. As pointed out by the researchers, Malay Malaysian English (also applicable to Chinese Malaysian English and Indian Malaysian English) is only a sub-variant or part of the broader concept of Malaysian English (ME) in which the concept of ME reflects the national identity inclusive of interlocutors of more than one ethnic. While in the study it is

noted that an inter-ethnic conversation is overall, intelligible to all interlocutors, it is still unknown if intelligibility will be affected if a subject of a different language or cultural background were to join in the conversation.

It must also be noted that most previous works on intelligibility deals with the field of phonetics and phonology. This is evident from the relatively extensive data documented on the relationship between the variants of speech sounds and intelligibility. Some of these notable studies include Deterding and Kirkpatrick's research (2006), Gimson's rudimentary international pronunciation (1978), Jenner's International English (1997) and Jenkins' Lingua Franca Core (LFC) (Jenkins, 2003). In the meantime, data on morphological and syntactical intelligibility is still relatively under-researched. Thus, this study also targets at investigating the effects of other linguistic variables on intelligibility.

### 1.2 Objective

This study aims to investigate the implications of nativised Malaysian English on the intelligibility of students from Mainland China.

### 1.3 Research Questions

(a) What are the linguistic features of a nativised Malaysian English that affect intelligibility for the Chinese from Mainland China (CC)?

(b) What are the possible effects of English used by the local ethnics, i.e., Malaysian Chinese (MC), Malaysian Malay (MM) or Malaysian Indian (MI) on the intelligibility for the Chinese from Mainland China (CC)?

## 1.4 Organisation of the Thesis

This research report comprises of five chapters. Chapter One begins with a brief account on the background of this study as well as issues pertaining Malaysian English and intelligibility. Such issues and arguments are further elaborated in Chapter Two with reviews of related previous studies. Chapter Three describes the research design and methodology employed to investigate and analyse the effects of spoken English by Malaysians on the comprehension of students from Mainland China. Following that, Chapter Four presents the findings including lists of features of Malaysian English that are potentially attributive to intelligibility and a detailed analysis of how the aforementioned linguistic features could have affected the international students' comprehension of discourses in Malaysian English. Finally, this study is concluded with an overall summary of this research as well as an explanation of the implications and limitations as reference for future research.

# CHAPTER TWO

# LITERATURE REVIEW

## 2.0 Introduction

In this chapter, varying studies on the intelligibility of non-native varieties of English will be reviewed. Due to the massive amount of previous studies pertaining intelligibility since the emergence of new varieties of English, this chapter will review on the development and nativisation of these new varieties as well as the controversies and conflicts in the past years on the concept of intelligibility. Thus, before proceeding to further discussions of the aforementioned topics in depth, this chapter will begin with an overview of the concept of intelligibility.

## 2.1 Intelligibility since 1950: An Overview

The introduction of the notion of 'intelligibility' can be traced back to as early as 1950 when Catford (1950) proposed the concept of intelligibility. In his article of the same name (i.e. *Intelligibility*), he defines the terminology as giving an "appropriate response in purpose of speaking", which also means to establish effective communication between the speaker and listener (Catford, 1950, p.7-8; cited by Nelson, 2008). Although it is a simplistic view of the term, this definition of intelligibility is to a certain extent, in accord with contemporary theories in the sense that intelligibility involves the *understanding* of the linguistic elements of a speech and giving appropriate responses.

Apart from that, Catford (1950) has also introduced the abstract concept of "threshold of intelligibility" in which he defines the concept in relation to one's familiarity of another language or language variety based on their degree of exposure with it.

According to him, the lower the degree of exposure, the lower is the user's familiarity to a language variety and consequently, the higher the threshold of intelligibility. Catford's (1950) proposal of a "threshold" to intelligibility sets linguists to thinking what are the elements that actually lower or heighten the threshold. The interest in this field is shown by the considerably wide amount of research studying linguistic elements that actually contribute to intelligibility of a language variety, may it be elements that enhance or obstruct intelligibility.

Following Catford's (1950) article, Smith and Nelson (1985) propose the conceptual layers of intelligibility, comprehensibility and interpretability, drawing a distinction between the concept of intelligibility and comprehensibility. Smith and Nelson's (1985) tripartite definition measures intelligibility in three levels with *intelligibility* referring to the recognition of individual words or utterances, *comprehensibility* referring to the ability to understand the meaning of words in its given context and *interpretability* as the listener's ability to understand the speaker's intention behind an utterance.

In his article *Spread of English and Issues of Intelligibility*, Smith (1992) continues to state that the conceptual layers should be viewed as a continuum, categorized in terms of degree of understanding with intelligibility at the lowest of the continuum and interpretability at the highest. This is to say that while an utterance may be intelligible, it may not be comprehensible, just like how we may understand the literal meaning of an utterance but may not get the intrinsic meaning behind it. With regards to this bottom-up approach of intelligibility, he advocates that achieving intelligibility (recognition of word/utterance) is easier than achieving comprehensibility (understanding meaning of word/utterance).

Smith's conceptual layers (1992) turned to be a model widely referred to in studies of cross-varietal intelligibility of Englishes. His works provides productive insights in the field of intelligibility which have become fundamental elements of the world Englishes framework. Jenkins, another linguist who is active in studies related to the field of intelligibility, also acknowledges Smith's definition of the terminology in general although she does not go in line with the suggestion that intelligibility is regarded insignificantly as compared to comprehensibility and interpretability (Jenkins, 2000). Whereas Smith's perception draws on cross-cultural communication, Jenkins situates her views on general linguistics and speech act theory in which she argues that intelligibility at locutionary and illocutionary levels is still essential for successful communication.

In support of her argument, she cites a few other linguists whose interpretation of intelligibility falls in line with her statement. Among them, she cites James (1998) who gave an example of an utterance like *Why you not like me?* to which he pinpoints that this utterance is in no way intelligible or grammatically correct. It could have been interpreted as "Why do you not like me?" or "Why are you not like me?". James (1998) attributes the unintelligibility of this ambiguous utterance as a result of lexical errors that could cause problem even at the mere decoding of its literal meaning. Using this example to illustrate how intelligibility could be impeded even by an error at the lexical level, both Jenkins (2000) and James (1998) continue to assert that intelligibility at its lexical level should also be perceived as significantly as other levels of understanding even if it is as in Smith's own conception, its intelligibility lies at the bottom of the continuum.

So it would seem that Smith's (1985, 1992) categorization of intelligibility in its broadest sense is not accepted by all researchers due to their own reasons and justifications. Be that it may be, there are still a considerably huge amount of publications that employ the

concept of intelligibility as put forward by Smith. Some of these publications have been co-authored by Smith himself and some are papers that are not written by him.

For instance, Munro, Derwing and Morton (2006) employ the definition as introduced by Smith in the sense that they also view "intelligibility" as actual understanding of speech production (i.e. oral production) which is distinct from "comprehensibility" that relies on the listeners' processing of the meaning of a message. Based on their conception of "intelligibility", they further add that listeners might experience a loss of intelligibility if the accent of an interlocutor differs from the speech patterns that they are familiar with. In this notion, Munro, Derwing and Morton (2006) expand the categorization of intelligibility as inclusive of "accents" as in their revised definition of Smith's conception, "accents" fall under the category of speech sound processing.

Interestingly, long before Munro, Derwing and Morton's (2006) proposal of their approach, Bisazza who co-authored with Smith, implemented a study which yielded similar results. In that study, Smith and Bisazza (1982) investigated the effects of intelligibility when text passages that are grammatically the same but phonologically different, were read by speakers of different English variety backgrounds. It was found that the English of an American speaker was the easiest for the participants to understand whereas English of an Indian was the most difficult. Another interesting find is that Japanese participants found their own fellow nation, the Japanese reader, most comprehensible.

From the results of their findings, it is evident that one's English is found to be more comprehensible when listeners have active exposure to it. American English, which is frequently heard through electronic media, is one of those English varieties users of English are familiar with. The Japanese listeners who found their fellow Japanese reader most

comprehensible can also be largely due to this very same reason. Since the Japanese are mostly exposed to their own variety of English, it is not surprising that they understand their own people the best.

Ironically, the results from Smith and Bisazza's study (1982) are in line with Jenkins' (2000) and James' (1998) argument that phonological and lexical variations, even at its low position on the bottom-up approach, does play a significant role in the concept of intelligibility. If English varieties that have the same grammatical structure but is phonologically different have an impact on comprehension of a message, then it is fundamental enough to be emphasized in the field of intelligibility.

While Smith and Bisazza's study (1982) conclude with the claim that intelligibility relies on variety exposure, another study by Matsuura, Chiba and Fujieda (1999) shows otherwise. Their research which looks at intelligibility and comprehensibility of the speech of American and Irish English teachers to Japanese subjects shows how variety exposure does not necessarily lead to better comprehension of a speech. Their findings lead them to sum up that while variety exposure may help users of English to have more tolerance towards the different varieties of the language, it may not promote intelligibility. What is thought by many as comprehensibility of the speakers is actually "perceived comprehensibility" and not the actual comprehensibility that is empirically verified (Matsuura et al., 1999).

From the diversity of studies advocating different notions of intelligibility, it is clear that there is a lack of consistency to the exact definition of the term. Some may be supportive towards one of the above definitions; others may criticize it with the justification that the concept of intelligibility as proposed is too simplistic to clarify the intricacies and complexities of the concept. Nevertheless, as far as studies of intelligibility are concerned,

these definitions are solid frames on which the concept of intelligibility is constantly studied and explored. They are the ones that offer the starting point to which subsequent studies develop and improve.

## 2.2 English around the World: The Emergence of New Englishes

The spread of English and the emergence of New Englishes are the central of discussions often tied to the concept of intelligibility. What draws on the people around the world on studies of intelligibility is due to an immense increase in the number of users of English around the globe in the past few decades. The English language, which is originally the language of intranational communication used mainly in English-speaking countries, has gradually developed a new functional status as the global language used not only by native-speakers but also by non-native speakers of English. As its functional range in various domains expands such as in terms of trade, commerce, tourism, diplomacy, literacy and science and technology, it is not surprising to see the English language receiving absolute attention in almost every part of the world. In fact, internationalization of the language has resulted in an estimated total of 430 million L2 users of English worldwide, a staggering amount surpassing the estimated total of 330 million L1 users of English (Crystal, 2003).

With such a striking growth in the population of English language users, it has given rise to issues such as that of classifying this diverse population of language users. Models of English have mushroomed ever since although some of these models of English may not be accepted by all linguists.

### 2.2.1 Models of English

One of the most common classifications that divide the English-speaking community by three groups is ENL, ESL and EFL (Platt, Weber and Ho, 1984). The first group, ENL (English as a native language), refers to those whose mother tongue or native language is English. They are the ones who were born and raised in countries where English is the primary language used by the majority of the population such as the United Kingdom (UK), United States of America (USA), Canada, Australia and New Zealand. Historically, ENL countries could be referred to as the 'traditional cultural and linguistic bases of English (Kachru, 1992b, p. 356).

The second group, ESL, describes those who use English as a second language. Users of ESL typically refer to those born and reside in countries which were once colonized by the British such as India, Nigeria, Malaysia, Singapore and Bangladesh. In these ESL countries, English is usually the official language even though it may not be the first language of the great majority of the population.

EFL, the final group of English speakers in this classification, are users of English as a foreign language. As suggested by its name, English is scarcely used nor does it serve much purpose within the country. The little opportunity where the people have exposure to the language is when they learn it at school, but outside the classroom, English does not play any role in their daily course of life. English is learned just for the sake of communication in international domains. Countries that fall into this category include China, Indonesia, Korea, Japan and many countries in the Middle East.

This three-way categorization is undoubtedly useful in its own way. However, it has its shortcomings to consider. One of its shortcomings is the way ENL is marked geographically in this model. This is not only misleading but also confusing, considering

the fact that not all of those residing in ENL countries are native speakers of English. There have always been large groups of ESL speakers living in ENL countries, particularly the United States (McArthur, 1998). Conversely, all of those born and raised in ESL countries are not necessarily non-native speakers of English. There are also a large number of native speakers of English in ESL countries such as in India and Hong Kong.

Even the dichotomy between ESL and EFL countries turns out fuzzier than as claimed. As English plays an increasingly important role in EFL countries such as in Japan and China, it would be far from valid to generalize each and every individual from both countries as ESL or EFL users especially when there is an obvious gap in the frequency of English usage in urban and rural areas. Regardless of whether they are from which of the two countries, city dwellers are found to have more opportunities in using the English language as compared to their rural counterparts (Thirusanku, J. and Yunus, M.M. 2012). As a result, not all ESL speakers are living in an EFL environment in reality, just as not all EFL speakers are living in an entirely EFL setting. To mark ENL, ESL or EFL as varieties of English, thus, does not seem to offer much accuracy or validity when they could not represent all English speakers within their own respective territories.

Apart from that, it is also problematic to classify pidgins and creoles into any of the categories. There are pidgins and creoles that could have belonged to ENL, ESL and EFL categories judging by how they are found to be spoken in all the three settings (McArthur, 1998). It would be confusing to classify them under all three categories and yet, also unreasonable as well if they were to be placed under one category and not the other.

It is also important to note that this model does not take into account the fact that English is often spoken around the world with occurrences of code-mixing (blending of phrases from another language) and code-switching (switching from one language to

another). These occurrences take place even in ENL countries where English is seen as the native language of the people. For instance, 'Spanglish', a hybrid of English and Spanish (code-blending), can be commonly heard in the United States (Gonzalez, 2010) as a result of Spanish diaspora in the country. In fact, the term 'native language' itself seems to imply that the English used by the ENL community is the standard variety to which ESL and EFL communities should look up to as the exemplary model to follow. Even up to this day, ENL is highly regarded by some as being more superior and appropriate than ESL and EFL varieties (see Quirk's admonitions on deficit linguistic, 1990, cited in Seidlhofer, 2003).

This idea as advocated by the ENL/ESL/EFL classification is, nevertheless, incorrect based on two main reasons. First, ENL is not a single variety. As proven in the examples above, an array of English varieties can be found within the ENL community. Since there is no uniformity as to which varieties could be representative of *all* ENL speakers, there is thus, no unanimous agreement stating that any of the varieties should be accepted as the representing 'standard' model of all native speakers. Second, the idea of using ENL as the 'standard' model suggests that such a model is appropriate in all types of domain including in ESL countries. However, actual fact shows that the local variety would be of a more adequate and acceptable model than the ENL model that was shoved to ESL and EFL speakers (Thirusanku, J. and Yunus, M.M., 2012).

As the ENL/ESL/EFL distinction becomes increasingly blurred (Graddol, 2006, p.110), Kachru (1985, 1992b) reproduced another model of English similar to the basic three-way taxonomy which is probably the most influential model to date describing the spread of English. In this model, Kachru divides World Englishes into three concentric circles, namely the Inner Circle, the Outer Circle and the Expanding Circle. These

concentric circles 'represent the types of spread, the patterns of acquisition and the functional allocation of English in diverse cultural contexts' (1992b, p.356).

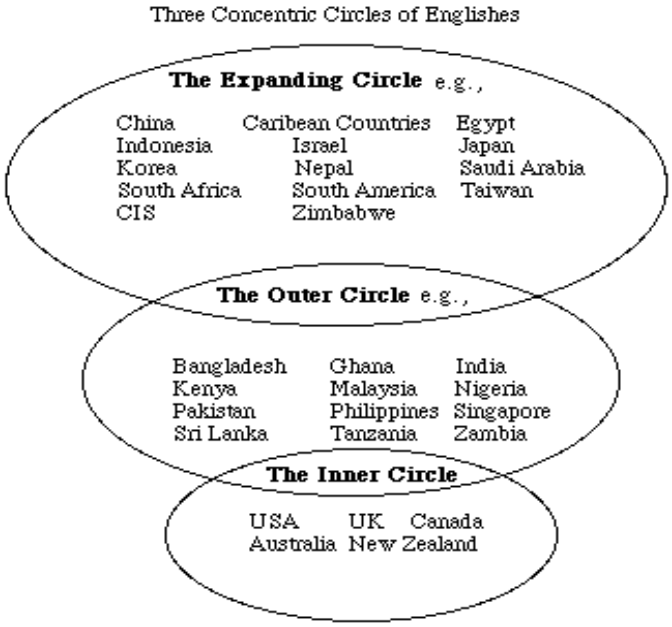


Figure 2.1: Kachru's Three Concentric Circles

The Inner Circle which resembles the nature of ENL, refers to the traditional and cultural bases of English. It describes the spread of English of the first diaspora when the English language travelled from Britain to other ENL countries such as the USA, Canada, Australia and New Zealand through migration of around 25,000 people from south and east of England since the sixteenth century (Jenkins, 2003). As countries with strongly rooted English backgrounds, the Inner Circle is said to be 'norm-providing'. In other words, the standards of the English language are set by the native speakers in the Inner Circle.

The Outer Circle, corresponding with the ESL category, refers to the institutionalized non-native varieties typically found in ex-colonies of the United Kingdom or the United States. The English language was distributed to the Outer Circle through the

second diaspora at some point during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries when local settlers of these countries started to learn English in order to interact with the English speakers from overseas (Jenkins, 2003, p.7). Due to English contact, the language subsequently gained status and developed from pidgins and creoles to a language that is now regarded as the official second language used widely within the circle (Jenkins, 2003, p.7, Rajadurai, 2005). On that account, the Outer Circle is depicted as 'norm-developing' by which the label came about due to how these Outer Circle countries (e.g. India, Singapore, Malaysia, the Philippines, etc.) are developing their own sets of English standards.

Meanwhile, the Expanding Circle represents the regions where the use of English varieties is limited to EFL contexts (e.g. lack functional use and official status). English is so restricted in its use within the Expanding Circle that it is scarcely spoken except when it is learned in educational institutions. Although the importance of the English language is recognized by countries of the Expanding Circle, it does not carry any administrative status in the society nor do the members of the Expanding Circle hold any historical colonization with the Inner Circle like the Outer Circle countries (Crystal, 1997, p.54). There is little motivation or need in learning the language as well since English hardly serves any purpose in the Expanding Circle. Having only minimal familiarity with English, the language in the Expanding Circle is not institutionalized with locally developed standards (McKay, S.L., 2002). Therefore, the Expanding Circle is known to be 'norm-dependent' which is to mean that its population depends on the standards set by the native speakers of the Inner Circle (Kachru, 1985, cited in McArthur, 1998).

Compared to the ENL/ESL/EFL taxonomy, Kachru's (1985, 1992b) concentric circle is more dynamic in nature. His model is favourable over the traditional dichotomy

between native and non-native speakers (Rajadurai, 2005) since being in the form of concentric circles, it does not show privilege to one category over the other. Unlike the traditional taxonomy, Kachru's (1985, 1992b) framework does not promote the English of the native speakers nor does it portray Inner Circle as being more superior than the other circles.

Besides, Kachru's (1985, 1992b) model has its advantage in that it pluralizes English into *many* Englishes, thus, is relatively more detailed in describing the diversity of English varieties in the real world rather than referring to it as a single variety. Kachru (1985) states that the emergence of these varieties of English possess their own multicultural identities which is an implication of the spread of English and not that of 'transplanting of one model to other countries' (Thirusanku, J. and Yunus, M.M, 2012). Again, Kachru is stressing that the new varieties of English are not any inferior than the English varieties of the native speakers. All varieties of English are generally on par with one another.

The advantage of Kachru's model does not merely stop at classification and description of world Englishes. The idea of having several varieties of English around the world has encouraged the forming of more terminologies by sociolinguists to describe the emergence of new Englishes. Each of these terminologies was developed in order to depict the different English varieties in different dimensions, thus, terminologies are semantically expanded to serve a wider range of function. For example, Kachru (cited in Vethamani, 1996) employs the term "new Englishes", "non-native varieties of English" and "Third World Englishes" whereas Platt et al. utilizes the term (1984) "New Englishes" to depict the distribution of English varieties around the world. Meanwhile, Strevens (1982) derives the term "Localised Forms of English" which looks at the new varieties in the aspect of

nativization. Undeniably, the expansion of these terminologies is useful in a way in that the emergence of new varieties of English can now be more effectively defined.

Despite the influence of Kachru's model (1985, 1992b), Kachru himself admitted that the framework he proposed is not without its limitations. A major problem in this model lies on the widening grey area between the circles. As the model is based on geography and genetics instead of on the way speakers use English (Jenkins, 2003, p.17), it is difficult to categorise some of the English users in any of the circles. For instance, some speakers in the Outer Circle (e.g. in Singapore, the Philippines, Malaysia) argue that English is their first language which as of right, makes them native speakers of English. However, as a member of the Outer Circle, they do not fall into the criterion of a native speaker. It seems that Kachru's (1985, 1992b) model falls short on accuracy and objectivity when these speakers are labeled ostensibly as non-native speakers based only on their birth and residency in territories of the Outer Circle.

Besides that, Kachru's (1985, 1992b) model depicts the Inner Circle, Outer Circle and Expanding Circle respectively as 'norm-providing', 'norm-developing' and 'norm-dependent'. The reality of international English, nevertheless, is often not as clear-cut as claimed (Crystal, 1995). The three-concentric model fails to consider the possible changes in the course of time, the status of English in any given country. As the role of English as a global language increases, we see a growth in the use of English inclusive of the so-called foreign language speakers in the Expanding Circle. These speakers from the Expanding Circle eventually develop varieties of English that reflect their own identity. Crystal (1995) thus, questions if norm-development is also possible in the Expanding Circle. If norm-development is possible in the Expanding Circle, then Kachru's framework (1985, 1992b) will again, become questionable as it will not be able to classify the circles which are

distinguishably categorized based on the development of norms. These constraints have gradually becoming an issue of concern as we shall see later, how non-native speakers (i.e. Outer Circle and Expanding Circle) are always held responsible for issues such as deterioration of English, unintelligibility and such.

Apart from the fuzzy boundary between the circles, Tripathi (1998) also asserts that there are 'no mechanisms to differentiate the varieties within a circle' (cited in Yoneoka, 2002). Kachru's model (1985, 1992b) lacks resilience in covering the many speakers of English who are bilinguals or multilinguals with balanced competency in more than two languages. This makes it difficult to decide whether English stands as these bilinguals' first, second or third language.

Adding on to its complexity, the concentric circle could not define its speakers based on their competency of the language. In the case of multilingualism, it is too judgmental to decide on one's language competency based solely on geographical categorization. But as Burt points out (2005), the model gives the impression that the Inner Circle stands at the top of the hierarchy whereas Outer Circle and Expanding Circle seem to be often marginalised. Even Kachru admittedly states that it is almost unavoidable to take 'second' as less worthy (Kachru and Nelson, 1996, p.79).

In response, Jenkins (2003, p.17) argues that non-native speakers who use English as their second or third language does not necessarily imply that their English competency is less than that of a native speaker. As such, Yano (2001, p.122-124) recommends that Kachru's (1985, 1992b) model be revised to take into account the many varieties of English in the Outer Circle which have become established and spoken by people who have now equate themselves to the native speakers whereby they further claimed that they too, are equipped with native speaker intuition.

### 2.2.2 Developmental Cycles of New English Varieties

Kachru's concentric circles (1985, 1992b) as shown above have given us a general idea of how the 'seeds' of English had spread and grow in every part of the world. As English establishes and developes in the different locations around the globe, it will normally take a local form, culminating its own distinctiveness and growing local roots. There will subsequently be an expansion in its uses followed by institutionalization of the local variety. These are some of the phases in the typical process through which varieties of English undergo.

Many scholars have claimed the tendency for varieties of English to go through similar phases or processes as described. Kirkpatrick (2007), for one, contends that the phases identified by several scholars tend to mirror those of another in numerous areas. Evidence can be adduced from the handful of different terminologies, all referring to the same idea. For examples, all the three terms "exonormative", "transported variety" and "imported variety" carry the same meaning which are used to refer to the English that originates from the outside of a particular country whereas "endonormative", "nativized variety", indigenized variety" or "acculturated variety" are often used interchangeably to refer to homegrown variety.

Among the scholars, Kachru (1992b) has come up with three-phases through which he claims non-native institutionalized varieties of English seem to undergo. At the first phase, speakers will initially show resistance against the use of the local variety. It is of their belief that imported native speaker variety is superior and error-free, and that it should be the standard model to which they themselves have to follow. The local variety on the contrary, is perceived as inferior, flawed and deformed. When the local variety starts to gain status, it will be perceived side by side as the imported variety. This marks the second

phase at which the local variety is now used for a wider range of purposes. At the third phase, the local variety becomes socially recognized and accepted. This is the stage when speakers of the local variety create an in-group identity. Those who speak the local variety are recognized as part of the group whereas those who speak the imported variety are considered as outsiders.

Another scholar, Moag (1982, 1992), has also proposed a life-cycle model of non-native Englishes similar to that of Kachru's (1992b) but based on Hall's "life cycle of Pidgin Languages" (Hall, 1962). Moag (1982, 1992) identifies five phases in the development of non-native varieties: "transportation", "indigenization", "expansion in use and function", "institutionalization" and "restriction of use and function". The first phase, or known as "transportation", refers to the arrival of English in a place where it has not been used before. At the second stage of "indeginization", the new variety of English starts to adopt local culture and gradually becomes distinct from the imported variety. The third stage marks the increase in the use of local variety with the broadening of its function. Once the role of the local variety is socially approved and promoted, it enters the fourth stage, "institutionalization". This is the stage when the local variety is used and learned at schools. In the fifth and final process, there is a reversal in the status of the local variety. As indicated by the name of this phase, the use and function of English is restricted, resulting in a decline in its usage within the country. While all varieties go through all the four former stages, this final stage may only be experienced by some such as Malaysia and the Philippines. In the case of Malaysia, English remained predominant until 1969 when constraints were imposed on the use of English for the sake of upgrading the status of the national language, that is, the Malay language (Andaya and Andaya, 1984; Gill, 2005).

Nevertheless, Vethamani (1996) added a sixth phase, "re-establishing of English", to Moag's model in account for the recent status of English in Malaysia. This stage is characterized by the reinstatement of the English status. Pennycook (1994) believes this could be due to that English is no longer perceived as a threat to national unity as the Malay language secures its position and stays in power as the national language. Be that as it may, the reestablished status of English is different from how it used to be, considering that it has not been fully restored to the status as that of during early post-independence (Omar ,1992).

### 2.3 Nativization/ Indigenization

For the purpose of this study, we will take a focus on the second process in the life cycle of an English variety, that is, "nativization" or as in Moag and Moag's (1977) model, the process of "indigenization". Also known by the names "acculturation" and "localization", nativization refers to the transference and diffusion of a local language to a new cultural environment (Sahgal, 1991, p.300). It is the result of "deep social penetration and extended range of functions of English in diverse sociolinguistic contexts" (Kachru, 1997, p.69) whereby it leads to the birth of localized registers and genres for the purpose of fulfilling communicative needs such as that to portray local social, cultural and religious identities (Kachru, 1997).

Studies on the nativization of English have always been placed in reference to indigenized varieties of English particularly those in the Outer Circle nations (Ramly, Othman and McLellan, 2002). These indigenized varieties develop differently depending on local needs (David, M.K. and Dumanig, F.P., 2008) and have overtime, established features that reflect their own respective culture and identity. From these features discovered in previous studies, it is not difficult to find commonalities between them to

which these features can be codified and grouped into a list of nativization characteristics. Ramly, Othman and McLellan (2002) whose study is based on Lowenberg's research (1984), have outlined the list which is as followed:

- Semantic shifts/ new collocations- English words or phrases and expressions that have their own meaning distinct from the normal English usage
- Transferred syntactic structures- English constructions that are influenced by another language
- Transcreation of similes, metaphors, proverbs- Similes, metaphors and proverbs that are transliterated into English
- Hybrid lexical constructions/ combinations of concepts from two or more cultures- word or expressions that are retained in the form of another language because there are no English equivalents

Relevant as it may be, the list formulated by Ramly, Othman and McLellan (2002) is still lacking for a thorough study of nativization. As clearly shown in the list above, the researchers have absolutely overlooked the phonological aspects of nativization despite the fact that nativization of English is often most conspicuous at the phonological level to some English varieties (Liu, J., 2008). At that point, it seems that there is no study so far that *explicitly* inventories the phonological characteristics of nativization. In fact, it appears that Ramly, Othman and McLellan (2002) are the only few who have listed down the characteristics explicitly.

This is not to say that other studies do not investigate the characteristics of nativization, but in contrast, most research narrow down their focus on identifying the features of a particular variety. In other words, most studies only identify the specific set of

features that reflects solely on a particular English variety rather than listing down the general characteristics of nativization. For instance, in the Malaysian context, Baskaran L. M. (2005) formulated a list of Malaysian English features such as phoneme reduction, dental fricative substitution, stops substitution, etcetera. These features of Malaysian English are distinct from the characteristics of other English varieties in which they also function as the identity marker to distinguish its community from speakers of other English varieties. Due to the specificity of focus put on a certain variety, the characteristic inventories laid out in the various studies tend to be different from one another depending on which varieties of English they are looking at. After all, as stated by David and Dumanig (2008), all nativized varieties of English develop differently.

### 2.3.1. Nativization of English in Malaysia

According to Vethamani (1996), the nativization process comes in two stages. At the first stage, a number of culturally-loaded local words are incorporated into the English language by new learners of English. These words are normally cultural markers which do not have an exact equivalent in English. The occurrences of word borrowing, nevertheless, remain pretty much at lexical level because local speakers are abided strictly by the models of English of the native speakers.

At the second stage of nativization, we see the liberation from the standards of English set by the native speakers. More local features are brought into the English language as it is used as a lingua franca for people of different language backgrounds. It is also at this stage that English becomes the preferred language choice to discuss cultural topics as well as unfamiliar matters (Moag, 1982). This second stage of nativization is particularly common in Malaysia since it is constituted by a diverse nation of different

linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Being a multiracial country, it is only natural for a complementary English variety to emerge for the purpose of intranational communication.

Malaysian English appears in different forms. Baskaran L. M. (1987) claims that the different forms of Malaysian English should be viewed in a continuum in which the acrolectal form of Malaysian English is placed at the top of the continuum and the basilectal variety at the bottom. At the acrolectal level, Malaysian English is very much complied with the native speakers' standards of English. Malaysian English at this level is at its highest and most prestigious form, having followed the formal standards of British English. It is hence, usually used in formal contexts.

Meanwhile, the mesolectal variety refers to the form of English used primarily in informal situations such as in casual conversations between Malaysians of different ethnicity. This variety is considered a local dialect used to build rapport between its speakers (Wong, 1982). According to Baskaran (1994), the quintessence of nativization lies at this level.

Moving down the continuum, the basilectal variety is the most colloquial form of English characterized by its pidgin-like qualities. This variety is regarded as "broken English" due to its large scale of varying deviations from the standard form. Due to limited vocabulary as well as the use of malformed structures, the basilect English is only intelligible to speakers who can communicate at this level (Baskaran, L., 1987).

Malaysian English has undergone nativization on all the levels throughout the continuum. It must be noted that nativization is not a process exclusive to the mesolectal and basilectal varieties but signs of nativization is also detected at the acrolectal level of English. Thirusanku and Yunus (2012) have claimed evidence of the occurrence of acculturation at the acrolectal level, stating that nativization at this level is characterized by

the frequent borrowing of lexical items from local languages such as the Malay language, Tamil and Mandarin. Most of these words, however, are introduced into English due to the absence of exact equivalents.

The mesolect, on the other hand, often involves code-switching or code-mixing where lexicalization is quite prevalent even for phrases that have their own equivalents in English (Baskaran, 1987). Similar to mesolect, it is found that mixing also occurs at the basilectal level. For instance, the particle "lah" is commonly used in Malaysian English but particularly prominent at the basilectal level. Thus, it can be adduced that what distinguishes it from the mesolect is in the leniency of deviations in which we see local language items heavily incorporated into the basilectal variety (Baskaran, 1987).

As mentioned earlier, the role of English as a medium of intranational communication has existed in a range of varieties from the "acrolect" to the "basilect" form. However, it is the Colloquial Malaysian English (i.e. mesolect and basilect) that seems to be the preferred variety when it comes to local communication due to the intra-group identity it holds. It acts as a strong identity carrier and connotes such firm intimacy and integrity that even speakers who have mastered the acrolect tend to switch to using the colloquial form from time to time so as to foster communication and a sense of solidarity among its speakers (Rajadurai, J., 2004). The lect switch, nevertheless, is "unidirectional", meaning that speakers who have mastered higher varieties (i.e. acrolect, mesolect) are able to move down the scale and speak on a basilectal level but not vice versa (Vethamani, 1996).

Undoubtedly, Nativised English is widely accepted and used by the locals in Malaysia despite the various deviations from native standards. In contrast, there are more negative responses against the use of exonormative accent than the use of Malaysian

English. It is found that local speakers using the accent of the native speakers are often regarded negatively as "put on" (Salleh, H., 2000). Ironically, an interview carried out by Schneider (2003) shows that Malaysian students believe the British and American accents to be 'good accents' and as worth a goal to be strived for. Perhaps this could be due to a few concerns such as the "falling standards of English in Malaysia" (Omar, A.H., 1996) and intelligibility issues that have gripped Malaysians restless.

## 2.4 Issues and Implications

### 2.4.1 Concerns for Standardization of a New Indigenous Variety

Although Malaysian English has received public acceptance and is widely used within the country, it lacks recognition as a standard variety (Rajandran, K., 2011). Such a lack of acknowledgment could be due to the lingering *misconceptions* from the traditional perspectives that varieties in the Outer and Expanding Circles are below par in standard. These misunderstandings shall be discussed as it is in concern with the problems that have abstained Malaysian English or several other so-called non-native varieties from being accepted as the standard norm. The word *misconception* employed in this case is in reference to the few fallacies as pinpointed by Kachru (1992b).

Firstly, it has always been misunderstood that English is learned in the Outer and Expanding Circle for the mere sake of interacting with native speakers of the language. Both Smith (1983) and Kachru himself (1988a, 1988b) deem this as only partially true. In the real context, English is not only used in interactions with native speakers but also among non-native speakers. In fact, it is the culturally-bound localized varieties that are often the preferred varieties used in conversations between non-native speakers. The use of exonormative conventions such as British English or American English, on the contrary,

may be considered as inappropriate for such interactions (Kachru, 1992b). Only with the use of localized norms can 'culture-bound strategies such as politeness, persuasion and phatic communion be effectively "transcreated' in English' (Kachru, 1981 and Kachru, Y., ed. 1991).

The same can be applied to the Malaysian context. As of 2010, over 86,000 students had enrolled in educational institutions in Malaysia to which 13.6% was taken up by students from Iran, 11.8% from China and 11.4% from Indonesia (Ministry of Higher Education Malaysia, cited in Institute of International Education). English, in this case, becomes the main vehicle of interaction among the speakers from Outer and Expanding countries. Apparently, it is often the localized varieties with their own distinct identity that are used in such interactions. To say that all non-native speakers could use a variety that is free of their own culture-bound conventions is in a sense, very unconvincing. After all, in most of the studies on New Englishes, we often see a wide range of English varieties being used in international discourses even for English language teachers (e.g. David Deterding's study on South-East Asian Englishes)[1].

Secondly, English has been misperceived by some, as a tool even for Outer and Expanding Circle countries, to understand the British or American cultural values. However, in most pluralistic regions of the Outer and Expanding Circle (also in the Malaysian context), English in its localized form plays several major roles such as that of imparting local traditions and cultural values, as identity specifier as well as the roles as language 'for education, pan-regional administration, national and international business, defense network, the media and literary creativity' (Kachru, 1992b).

[1] In David Deterding's study on South-East Asian Englishes (2006), he investigated the conversations between English language teachers from different ASEAN countries.

Apart from that, one of the main concerns of most Malaysians is in the third perception, that is, Malaysian English or many other endonormative varieties, are seen as too defective and flawed to be considered the standard norm and thus, the native models of English are what we should prescribed to (Quirk, 1988). This perception has resulted in the position that any "variations" or "deviations" from the native model is considered an "error" which is to say that Malaysian English, even at its acrolectal form, is deficient and inferior. This is not true because it ignores the differences in the functional appropriateness of language use in the different sociolinguistic contexts (Kachru, 1992b). Malaysian English, no matter at which lectal level, is relevant in the different socio-cultural contexts. As mentioned earlier, even the colloquial form of Malaysian English plays an important integrative role within the country.

At this point, it seems that the problem with standardization of Malaysian English does not totally lie in the absence of a standard model. On the contrary, Malaysia has its endonormative standard which is based on the acrolect Malaysian English. It is the attitude in considering Malaysian English as a valid standard that denies it the ability to be promoted as the official standard model. This is evident in a survey conducted by Pillai (2008b, p.33) where only a mere 29% of her respondents surveyed could accept a local accent while the rest expressed disapproval due to the reason of 'sounding unprofessional'. If Malaysian English remains under the shadow of colonial standard variety and does not plan for standardization, the chances of establishing a Standard Malaysian English with the same prestige as native varieties is likely to be very slim.

### 2.4.2 Pedagogical Concerns

The manifestation of doubts on legitimizing Malaysian English is not without a reason. There is an ongoing fear, as Asmah Haji Omar (1996) has called to attention, regarding the deterioration in the standards of Malaysian English. After independence, English has expanded, evolved and adapted to meet its purposes. With the emergence of a new English variety (i.e. Malaysian English), it is no longer subjugated to the dominance of the variety spoken by its colonial native speakers. It grows to have its own cultural distinctiveness, displaying features of simplification and reduction as well as effects of an acculturated variety (Gumperz, 1972).

Unfortunately, Gill (1994) has pointed out that 'earlier divergent language policies and implementation has retarded the steady growth of English proficiency in Malaysia'. It involves cases such as that of establishing Bahasa Malaysia as the national language while English is reduced to being a second language not long after independence (Gill, 1994). This reduction in the role of English in formal and public domains has cut down demands for English which has also reduced the people's exposure to acrolect English. Consequently, it has encouraged the widespread use of mesolect and basilect. Taking Gill's stance, Rajandran (2011) claims this as bringing more harm than help as he believes that the Malay language is not capable of replacing all the roles of English.

Regardless of that, Gill adds that the status of English is *slightly* reinstated in 2002 with the introduction of English in the teaching of Science (Selangor Education Department: 2002). By *slightly*, it generally means that the status of English which has been re-established is never the same as how it used to be, considering it has not been fully restored to the status as that of during early post-independence (Omar, A.H. ,1992). Such an action, nonetheless, is an indication of a growing need and demand for English in Malaysia which

is progressing in technology and industrialization (Gill, S.K., 1994). In order to exploit these strands, English conveniently becomes the crucial key in understanding these fields. The acrolect, in this regard, is most important as it is the most suitable candidate among the three lects to link Malaysians with the world.

It is, thus, crucial in the pedagogical terms, to ensure the English competence of students is up to par. The students should at least have a good enough command of English to reach the knowledge that is often expressed in English. A way to achieve that goal is through English education with adequate syllabuses and teaching methodologies while the other method is through good education system. For the latter, it seems that the government has now embarked on improving the education system in the teaching and learning of English (Rajandran, K., 2011).

It should also be noted that keeping the students' competence level of English in check has another purpose, that is, to enable them to shift lects. As lect switching is "unidirectional", meaning that only those who can speak the higher variety can move down the scale to use the mesolect or basilect but not vice versa, students have to master the acrolect in order to switch lects effectively (Vethamani, M.E., 1996).

Another caveat that should be taken note of is to know at what kind of contexts can one switch lects. Before lect switching, interlocutors must take into account the sociolinguistics of their interaction (Gill, 2002, p.56). Students need to be taught how to switch lects at the appropriate contexts. Likewise, they need to learn to use the appropriate lect to suit the different domains. Hence, consciousness-raising is a must as it ensures the students' awareness to the linguistic diversity and cultural sensitivity of the world. Not knowing so will only result in an uncomfortable situation for both speaker and listener while portraying an image of an incompetent user of English (Rajandran, K., 2011).

### 2.4.3 Concerns for Intelligibility

One major concern pertaining to the issues of nativization and standardization is the debate on intelligibility. What is the parameter for intelligibility? What are the elements that lower or heighten the 'intelligibility threshold' that was proposed by Catford (1950)? What causes communication breakdowns? These are the questions that have always been the conundrum in previous research in attempts to work out a holistic approach to intelligibility.

Reviewing past studies, it is discovered that non-native speakers are often unjustly blamed for communication breakdowns. When communication is hampered, it is almost axiomatic for non-native speakers to be blamed right away as the root cause of the problem. This unjustly accusation is often due to at least two fallible assumptions. First, the speech of a non-native speaker has always been assumed as defective or overly accented and therefore, incomprehensible. This assumption can be seen in some research such as that of Anderson-Hsieh's study (1992) that analyse pronunciation variations in terms of "error rates" as well as Lanham(1990) who concludes that unintelligibility is one of "the consequences of error" in South African Black English. Apparently, non-native varieties are still being equated with a lack of intelligibility.

The stigmatization of non-native varieties as defective and accented is not only disparaging but also misleading. For one, it is not true for the label of 'foreign accent' to be referred only to non-native varieties of English; for another, non-native varieties are not 'linguistic deficit' but 'variations, neither are the native varieties anywhere near to being the 'panacea to all problems of intelligibility' (Rajadurai, J., 2007). Research has shown that in Outer and Expanding Circle countries, it is the native-like accent that is labeled as "foreign" whereas the local accent is usually seen as "accentless". In Malaysia, for instance, the use of a native-like accent is often mocked as "putting on" a false accent (Salleh, H.,

2000). Clearly, it does not make sense to expect local speakers to label their own speech variety as having a 'foreign accent'.

It is unreasonable as well to pass judgement as to whose accent or the overall English model that actually facilitates or hinders intelligibility. As pointed out by Pillai (2008a, p.45), Malaysian English though sounding different, 'does not necessarily mean being deficient'. In fact, a series of studies by Munro and Derwing (1995a, 1995b) has proven that non-native speech may be highly intelligible even if it has a strong local accent. Another study by Crismore, Ngeow and Soo's (1996, p. 325) has also revealed that more than 70% of their Malaysian respondents denied that non-Malaysians will not understand them if Malaysian English is used. Turning to the perspective of a native speaker, British respondents in a survey conducted by Jassem (2014, p.10) actually perceived Malaysian English to be 'more easily understood than many varieties of American or Australian English'. Although it is true that non-native speech may not be always intelligible, it is still a false comparison and a pre-conceived prejudice to equate non-native speech with unintelligibility.

On the second assumption, native speakers are always considered the final arbiters of intelligibility whereas the non-native speaker, the suspect. In circumstances where a discourse lacks intelligibility, there will always be the prevailing presumption that native speakers should be entitled the rights to judge the speech of non-native speakers which they suspect, is most probably "problematic". Phillipson (1992, p.194) criticizes this as a "native speaker fallacy" while Milroy (1999, p.178) describes it as a kind of "covertly articulated racial prejudice" because there is little reason to assume that native speakers have the rights to determine the acceptability of a speech sample in relation to intelligibility. As argued by Bamgbose (1998, p.10), intelligibility is not a "one-way process" in which non-native

speakers are striving to make their speech comprehensible to native speakers nor is the role of native speakers that of deciding what is intelligible and what is not. Therefore, native speakers have “no say in the matter, no right to intervene or pass judgement” (Widdowson, 1994, p.85).

Now that it is understood that non-native varieties are not necessarily the main cause for miscommunication, it has left us to ponder upon the variables that contribute to intelligibility, regardless of whether it is a boost or an obstacle to intelligibility. The traditional perspective on the attributive variables is that deviations from the standard model of English will cause unintelligibility. This perception is clearly shown in the arguments above.

Seidlhofer (2001), however, has discovered that certain traditionally perceived major errors such as the omission of third person present tense –s, incorrect use of relative pronouns “who” and “which”, incorrect omission and insertion of articles, wrong use of tag questions as well as redundant prepositions do not affect comprehension at all. Likewise, it is also observed that certain features which are deemed as most typical of the English language, for example, the subject-verb agreement, tags and phrasal verbs and idioms, turn out to be irrelevant for mutual intelligibility.

Another scholar, Patil (2006), reckons that poor articulation can also have an effect on intelligibility. For instance, Japanese speakers tend to face difficulties in the articulation of /r/ and /l/ which could lead to confusion in distinguishing minimal pairs such as “glass” / “grass”, “red”/ ”led”, “right’/ “light” and so on. Offner (1995) thus, states that an inaccurate pronunciation is excusable if it is comprehensible; if not, it must then be perfected. That is the fundamental rule of communication.

After analyzing all instances of communication breakdowns, Jenkins (2000) also reports that pronunciation issues remain 'the biggest source of loss of comprehensibility or intelligibility'. At this point, Jenkins (2000, 2002) believes that intelligibility can be retained if a speech form conforms to a certain set of phonological features in which she claims, are crucial elements for intelligibility. This set of features is undoubtedly, one of the most notable and detailed study in the field of intelligibility. With regards to that, this set phonological features as proposed by Jenkins, or most commonly known as the Lingua Franca Core (LFC), will also be one of the main theoretical frameworks employed in this study.

Jenkins' study (2000) mostly revolves around English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) whereby she investigates communications between English speakers from various backgrounds. In short, Jenkins' study is focused more on the non-native speakers of English rather than the native speakers. The emphasis on the non-native varieties, thus, suits as a reference for this research which is based on an Outer Circle variety, the Malaysian English.

As Nihalani (1997) points out, two foreigners of the same nationality can communicate smoothly with mutual intelligibility using English with their own phonetic and phonological system. One must, however, adopt certain basic features of English before they can communicate in an international domain.

Incidentally, Jenkins (2000, 2002) introduces the Lingua Franca Core (LFC), referring to a set of features used by users of the new Englishes. These features which centralize on the phonological aspect of English as an International Language (EIL), are claimed to be essential elements in assuring mutual intelligibility. Thus, LFC can be taken as as an 'international pedagogical core that would guarantee intelligibility for all speakers'

(Rajadurai, 2006). In this list of LFC, Jenkins divides the EIL phonological features into two main categories, the core and non-core features. The former category refers to phonological elements that are essential in guaranteeing intelligibility such as substitutions of fricatives /θ/ and /ð/, allophonic variation within phonemes, certain omission of consonant sound in middle and final clusters, addition of consonant sound in clusters, etcetera. Meanwhile, the latter category refers to features that are non-attributive to intelligibility such as vowel quality, weak forms (i.e. use of schwa), assimilation and so on.

Jenkins' LFC (2000, 2002) is conceptualized in terms of shared elements or a core of commonality among varieties of English (Jenner, 1997), as it is believed that intelligibility can be facilitated if there are shared features or 'common features' in the varieties of English spoken by both parties. This ideology of a 'common core' has subsequently become the subject of investigation to David Deterding's 2006 study on the intelligibility of emerging South-East Asian Englishes. His study which employs Jenkin's LFC and the theory of a 'common core' as the basis of his research, examines conversational data obtained from interactions between English language teachers from ten ASEAN countries.

Results from his research reveal that there is a relationship between pronunciation and intelligibility whereby he claims that mispronunciation is a contributing factor that leads to misunderstandings in an international communication. While most of the features identified to be problematic in Deterding's (2006) study matches that of Jenkin's LFC (2000, 2002) of 'problematic phonological features', Deterding also discovers a feature that is excluded from Jenkin's Lingua Franca Core. Deterding's discovery suggests that Jenkins' LFC may not be exhaustive enough to cover all features that are attributive to intelligibility.

This, therefore, provides all the more reasons to conduct more research in order to perfect the core list.

Apart from that, it is also shown in the study that some 'problematic features' turn out to be non-common features in the English varieties used by the different ASEAN speakers. This makes one wonders if it is true to the word of Deterding's that non-common features are also one of the contributing factors to communication breakdowns. In contrast, Deterding (2006) argues that there is no evidence to prove that shared pronunciation features could have led to any miscommunications. It seems axiomatic that shared features may enhance intelligibility but the question remains whether these shared features could have an opposing effect on the intelligibility of English lingua francas.

Bent and Bradlow (2003) who investigate intelligibility among Koreans and Chinese listeners, discover that these nonnative listeners find the English of nonnative speakers whom they shared a native language as intelligible as the native speakers. The researchers reckon that this could be due to what they called the 'matched interlanguage intelligibility benefit', referring to the situation where intelligibility is facilitated among listener with a shared first language due to familiarity with each other's interlanguage.

The conditions as set in Bent and Bradlow's (2003) study resemble that in this study on a cultural note. Just as in Bent and Bradlow's study where Koreans and Chinese who shared a common native language have been investigated, this research also explores the concept of intelligibility between Malaysian Chinese and Chinese Chinese whose mother tongue and culture are similar. If Bent and Bradlow's theory proves to be correct, intelligibility will not be disrupted between the Chinese participants in this study due to 'matched benefits' regardless of their nationalities.

Meanwhile, the researchers also found a 'mismatched interlanguage benefit' which refers to intelligibility of the speech of nonnative speakers who do not share a common native language. Again, this suggests that the English used by Malaysian non-Chinese (i.e. Malays and Indians) will not hinder intelligibility due to 'mismatched interlanguage benefit'.

Bent and Bradlow's study appears to accord with Deterding (2006) who observes that the pronunciations of ASEAN speakers do not seem to affect comprehensibility for other ASEAN listeners. Their findings also attested to Jassem's (2014, p.10) study where it is discovered that 'the more similar accents are, the more intelligible they become', hence proving the existence of such 'matched benefits'. Conversely, studies by Date (2005) as well as Kirkpatrick and Saunders (2005) have reported that Singapore English may be unintelligible for listeners from other Asian countries such as those from Japan and China. Another study by Major et al. (2002) has also shown that there is no significant matched benefit among the Chinese, Japanese, Spanish and North American speakers. In fact, it is found that Chinese listeners find Chinese-accented English difficult to understand.

It thus seems that in overall, it is too early to conclude whether the search of a 'common core' or some sort of commonalities between users of English is significant or not. Perhaps, it is as pointed out by Channing Burt (2005) that there is a need for larger databases before a more conclusive explanation can be made, which is the reason this study is carried out. It is not only in consideration to the need of closing the research gap but also in respect to looking for an explanatory answer to the contradicting findings in some of the current studies, for an example, the claim about how major errors (regardless of phonological, grammatical or syntactical errors) do not hinder ELF communication. This

discovery, Burt reckons, may have contradicted the findings of most studies. However, as Burt added, there are several doubts that are yet to be answered in future research.

Moving on to the core approach of lexicogrammar, it is found that the amount of studies exploring the relationship between lexicogrammar and intelligible is relatively limited. Some scholars seem to find it more necessary to study the effects of prosodic variations on intelligibility than the effects of grammar variations. Patil (2006), for example, thinks that grammar mistakes do not bother him as much as pronunciation errors do. This perception, coincidentally parallels that of Jenkins (2000, p. 83). as she describes pronunciation as 'possibly the greatest single barrier to successful communication'.

On the other hand, Pickering (2006) argues that other linguistic variables are as essential for ELF interlocutors as phonological aspects of intelligibility. In response to Jenkins' claims, Pickering asserts that phonology is merely one aspect of a speaker's language output and thus, other linguistic variables should not be regarded lightly.

As with Jenkins' LFC (2000, 2002), there are also attempts to produce a core of lexicogrammar for EIL interaction. One of the few earlier works to produce a core lexicogrammar is that of Quirk's (1982) Nuclear English, in which, he claims to be easier and faster to learn than full English, communicatively adequate, and amenable to extension in the course of any further learning (cited in Jenkins, 2003). Unlike LFC which takes a descriptive approach, Quirk's Nuclear English is the revised and simplified form of the native standard, resulting in it being too prescriptive and hardly leaves any room for sociolinguistic variation based on the learners' regional backgrounds. Centralising more on the needs of the native speakers, it is also not genuinely looking at the issue of communication on an international ground.

Following Quirk's footstep, Seidlhofer (2001a, 2001b) also develops a lexicogrammar core list known as the lexicogrammatical 'sins' in which the list includes:

- using the same verb form for all present tense verbs. E.g. '3rd person –s'
- not putting a definite or indefinite article in front of nouns
- using 'who' and 'which' interchangeably
- using just the verb stem in contructions that need gerunds
- using 'isn't it' as a universal tag question

(from Jenkins, Modiano and Seidlhofer 2001, p.16, cited in Jenkins 2003)

In comparison, Seidlhofer's (2001a, 2001b) lexicogrammatical approach is more descriptive of the ELF context than that of Quirk's. Therefore, Seidlhofer's core list will be employed in this study as a reference in the analysis later. In return, it is also hoped that with the implementation of this study, there will be new items discovered to add to the list.

Seidlhofer (2001a, 2001b) explains that the items in the list are lexicogrammatical elements that regularly occur in VOICE (Vienna-Oxford International Corpus of English). However, these so-called 'sins' are non-attributive to miscommunication. The greatest factors of miscommunication, as Seidlhofer (2001a, 2001b) points out, are the speaker's vocabulary and what she calls the 'unilateral idiomaticity'. For example, non-native speakers always find the use of idiomatic expressions such as 'give a hand' instead of 'help', more difficult to understand. Reiterating Seidlhofer's claim, both Jenkins and Nelson also acknowledge that comprehension is very likely to be hampered by the occurrence of lexical variation (Jenkins, 2000) or the use of localized vocabulary terms (Nelson, 1995).

## 2.5 Conclusion

As indirectly highlighted by Andrew Sewell (2010), there are much more to intelligibility than mere identifications of common features. In his study, he explained intelligibility in terms of lexical frequency and functional load in which he argues, are also fundamental variables that one should not overlooked. Hence, these factors might also be examined in this paper in the discussions of intelligibility of Malaysian English.

Overall, it is clear from the preceding review that more research need to be done especially in exploring Malaysian English, not just on the issues of intelligibility, but also on issues of legitimization as well as pedagogical concerns. While we see studies on new Englishes (e.g. Singapore English) gaining momentum, there is still a lack of studies on Malaysian English. Hence, with the aims of identifying whether the use of Malaysian English poses any problems of comprehensibility, this study hopes to determine the extent to which intelligibility is assured in an ELF domain as well as the probability for Malaysian English to be legitimized. As pointed out by Seidlhofer (2004), the fundamentality of descriptive work in legitimizing a new variety owes to its importance in 'establishing a linguistic reality' which is a 'precondition for acceptance' (p.215).

# CHAPTER THREE

# RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

## 3.0 Introduction

This research employs a qualitative analysis in order to determine and explore in depth the elements that are crucial to the intelligibility of Malaysian English. The overall research design of this study is adapted from Coetzee-Van Rooy's (2009) research. In this chapter, the researcher provides descriptions of two groups of participants, research instruments (i.e. audio recordings and questionnaire) as well as the research design used for data collection and data analysis.

## 3.1 Participants

### 3.1.1 Interview Participants (Local Malaysian Students)

Prior to the study, six Malaysian students of different ethnics were selected through stratified random sampling in preparation for the recordings of nativised Malaysian English. The use of stratified random sampling is to ensure that the six Malaysian participants comprised of a balanced ratio of two Chinese, two Malays and two Indians.

The purpose of having a balanced ratio of ethnic groups among the participants is in consideration of Research Question 2 where cultural element will be analysed in order to look into its role in intelligibility which is also in accordance with the inter-ethnic variations as addressed by Ahmad Mahir and Silahuddin Jarjis (2007). In their study, Ahmad Mahir and Silahuddin Jarjis differentiate the English used by the different ethnic groups and thus, suggesting the occurrence of ethnic-based English varieties such as the Malay Malaysian English, Chinese Malaysian English and Indian Malaysian English. The

researcher hence, finds it important to have a balanced amount of participants in each ethnic group in order to ensure a balanced use of linguistic repertoire among the different races which could avoid results being biased towards one of the ethnic groups.

Apart from that, all the selected speakers of Malaysian English are non-English majors from University of Malaya whose dominant language is also not English. In other words, the selected students are from Malay, Indian and Chinese medium schools respectively where daily communicative language used in their former schools among peers and sometimes, with teachers, is normally their own mother tongue or non-English languages.

The rationale for following the above criteria is to capture the different linguistic features that could be occurring in the English used among the different ethnic groups as round-the-clock use of their own mother tongue in daily conversations and the frequent use of non-English languages in school allows more space for ethnic-based influences on their spoken English to occur. This criterion indirectly suggests that the level of English used by these participants for daily conversation is in the range between basilect and mesolect. Similarly, this is in respect to Research Question 2 which aims to find out if nativisation of English by the different ethnic groups will play a role in the intelligibility of speech.

Table 3.1: Malaysian Participants (speaker)

| Details / Participant | Ethnic | Gender | Age | Course/ Faculty | Dominant language | Medium of Instruction in Previous Schools |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Chinese | M | 22 | Engineering (Undergraduate) | Mandarin | Chinese (vernacular school) |
| 2 | Malay | M | 22 | Academy Pengajian Melayu | Malay | Malay (national |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | (Undergraduate) | | school) |
| 3 | Malay | M | 22 | Computer Science and Information Technology (Undergraduate) | Malay | Malay (national school) |
| 4 | Indian | F | 22 | Arts and Social Sciences (Undergraduate) | Tamil, Malay | Malay (national school) |
| 5 | Indian | M | 22 | Faculty of Science (Undergraduate) | Tamil | Malay (national school) |
| 6 | Chinese | F | 22 | Languages and Linguistics: Major in Chinese language (Undergraduate) | Chinese | Malay (national school) |

### 3.1.2 Chinese Participants (International Students)

20 undergraduate students from China were randomly selected. The selected participants are a combination of English and non-English majors due to the use of English not only in English classes but also in non-English classes. Therefore, intelligibility of Malaysian English, a variety that is so often used in casual daily conversations, plays as much importance for the non-English majors as for the English majors. This is especially true when international students from both English and non-English majors (in this case, the Chinese international students) who are made up of non-native speakers of English (NNS), are often the ones who felt the tremendous impact of intercultural miscommunication and cultural shock (Anderson, 1992). These communication breakdowns are often blamed on the "foreigners" whose English sound distinctly different from the local varieties of English (Chang, 2009; Dooley, 2009) despite the fact that intercultural miscommunication is due to language and cultural barriers between both speakers and not just the speaker that may be foreign to the country (Chang, 2009).

Nevertheless, for the purpose of this study, selection of Chinese participants based on their level of English competence is kept within a specific range so that all of them have the basic understanding of the language enough to be studied in this research. Therefore, all Chinese participants are ensured to have already passed their English competence tests such as Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) or International English Language Testing System (IELTS) or any equivalent tests prior to their arrival to Malaysia as well as before admittance to the university. All Chinese participants are required to have at least scored a minimum of 400 on TOEFL or a Band 4 on IELTS.

Besides that, the selected participants are a combination of University Malaya international students who have been in Malaysia for at least three months up to as long as over six years. The researcher finds this information necessary particularly for the analysis of any miscommunications or misinterpretations of Malaysian English in this study.

Table 3.2: Chinese Participants (listener)

| Details / Participant | Course/ Faculty | Spoken language(s) | Dominant language | Duration of stay in Malaysia |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Actuarial Mathematics & Finance | Mandarin, English | Mandarin | 5 years |
| 2 | Investment | Mandarin, English | Mandarin | 3 months |
| 3 | Public Administration | Mandarin, English | Mandarin | 1 year |
| 4 | Economics and Administration | Mandarin, Mongolian, English | Mandarin, Mongolian | 6 months |
| 5 | English Language | Mandarin, English, French | Mandarin | 6 months |
| 6 | Language and Linguistics (English) | Mandarin, English | Mandarin | 4 years |
| 7 | Language and Linguistics | Mandarin, English, Spanish | Mandarin | 6.5 years |
| 8 | Language and | Mandarin, English, | Mandarin | 6 months |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Linguistics | Russia | | |
| 9 | Economics | Mandarin, Cantonese, English | Mandarin | 3 months |
| 10 | Malay Studies | Mandarin, Cantonese, English, Malay | Mandarin | 6 months |
| 11 | Actuarial Science | Mandarin, Cantonese, English, Korean | Mandarin | 5 years |
| 12 | International Relations | Mandarin, English | Mandarin | 3 months |
| 13 | Building Surveying | Mandarin, English | Mandarin | 3 years |
| 14 | Ecology and Biodiversity | Mandarin, English, Malay | Mandarin | 3 years |
| 15 | Finance | Mandarin, English | Mandarin | 6 months |
| 16 | Economics | Mandarin, English, Japanese | Mandarin | 1 year |
| 17 | Poetry | Mandarin, English | Mandarin | 3 months |
| 18 | Malay Studies | Mandarin, English, Malay | Mandarin | 3 months |
| 19 | Music Studies | Mandarin, English | Mandarin | 3 months |
| 20 | Music Studies | Mandarin, English | Mandarin | 3 months |

## 3.2 Methods and Instruments

### 3.2.1 Recordings

Prior to the actual study, six recordings of Malaysian English were collected (see section 3.1.1). These recordings serve two purposes: 1) as speech extract for the determination of features of Malaysian English which is to serve as supporting data to the analysis of intelligibility later on, and 2) as a tool to test the Chinese international students' comprehensibility on spoken Malaysian English.

With respect to the former, the analysis will be relevant to answer both research questions 1 and 2 in which linguistic features of Malaysian English from the recording extracts will be subsequently identified and analysed with the answers from the Chinese international students's questionnaire. As for the latter purpose, the recordings were used as

speech data to create the aforementioned set of questionnaires as a testing tool for the international students before these recordings were played to the students.

In preparation for the recordings, six local students of different ethnics (see Table 1) were interviewed individually by the same researcher. This helps eliminate possible influences to the findings of the study that might have occurred if different interviewers with a different interviewing style or accent are used. Nevertheless, the recordings were double checked by an inter-rater for credibility concerns in the evaluation of Malaysian English used by these students.

All participants gave their verbal consent for an interview after the researcher gave a brief account on the purpose of the interview and promised that they will be kept anonymous in this study. A verbal consent is preferred over a written consent because the researcher finds a written consent unnecessary in the condition where no probing questions were asked. A consent obtained verbally is deemed sufficient where the research presents no more than minimal risk of harm to participants, involves no procedures for which written consent is normally required outside of the research context, or where oral (verbal) consent may better protect the interests of the participants (Pech, Cob and Cejka, 2007). Before the start of the interview, all participants were also reassured that this is not a test and that they should speak like how they normally do so as to encourage them to speak naturally as well as to avoid intentional imitation of native-like English accent.

Each interview which was audio-recorded lasted about five to ten minutes. The rationale of an interview is to ensure spontaneity of speech so as to serve as naturally-occurring data. This is in relation to the issue of authenticity and spontaneity of the speech as pointed out by Rajadurai (2007). In her article on 'Ideology and Intelligibility', Rajadurai (2007) questions the validity and reliability of most intelligibility studies which

use speech samples of read data or recordings of rehearsed topics. Thus, for purposes of retaining 'natural speech', the recordings selected for this study are neither rehearsed students' presentations nor read data.

Questions asked involved all six main topics including describing:

(a) the most memorable incident in their life,

(b) their favourite festival,

(c) their hobby,

(d) childhood games,

(e) uniqueness of Malaysia and

(f) their opinion on whether Malaysian should speak like a English native speaker.

As shown in the list above, some of the topics above were aimed at obtaining speech that contains culturally-loaded features whereas the others were for the purpose of acquiring speech that is relatively less loaded with cultural elements. Additional questions were added to prompt the conversation but all added questions are within the scope of the aforementioned six topics.

The interview recordings were edited to keep the length of each recording balanced and proper for the questionnaires (Section B). It was also to ensure smooth flow of conduct when the recordings are to be played on the actual day of survey.

The recordings were also transcribed to identify any linguistic features used. The features identified will be used to analyse the results obtained from the questionnaires answered by the Chinese students from Mainland China.

### 3.2.2. Questionnaire

Questionnaire is considered a useful method to examine patterns and frequency (Evalued Burmingham City University, 2006) which is the reason it is used in this study for the analysis of the participants' response patterns and the frequency of miscommunications. The purpose of the questionnaire is to test on the subjects' understandings of what they have heard from the recordings of Malaysian English. The answers from their questionnaire are to be analysed corresponding to Research Question 1 and Research Question 2. The questionnaire consists of two sections, Section A and Section B (refer to Appendix A).

Section A of questionnaire

Section A aims to elicit personal information of the participants including their dominant language, duration of their stay in Malaysia up until now and the course they major in.

Section B of questionnaire

The subsequent section (Section B) comprises of two parts which consist of test items corresponding to the recording extracts (i.e. Recording 1- Recording 6). The two parts of test items in Section B:

Question 1- Test items are in the form of a cloze test. The purpose of this section is to test one of the aspects of intelligibility, that is, word recognition. Phrases were taken out from the extracts and left 'blank'. The participants are required to fill-in-the-blanks after listening to the recordings.

Question 2- Test items are in the form of open-ended questions. The rationale of doing so is to test on their comprehensibility or interpretability of Malaysian English. Participants are required to give a summary of what they heard from the extract.

### 3.3 Data Collection

Before the research starts, the Chinese participants from Mainland China are reassured that this is not a test as they will not be judged on their English proficiency. They are also informed of the researcher's intention of investigating the comprehensibility of the speech extracts rather than positing judgment on their listening capabilities or their language proficiency. The reassurances are to eliminate or minimize the participants' burden of 'doing a test' (Liu, J.X., 2008). Apart from that, it helps the researcher to elicit honest answers of what the participants truly heard from the recordings rather than intentional brain-storming for the correct answers.

These Chinese participants from Mainland China where most of them are students from Beijing, are then required to listen to the three recordings of Malaysian English (see section 3.2.1) provided by the researcher before answering a set of questionnaires (see section 3.2.2) in order to investigate their intelligibility of Malaysian English.

The researcher is present throughout the duration of the study but only with the tasks of playing the recordings as well as giving instructions. The Chinese listeners are allowed to listen to the recordings twice but not more than that. The 'second chance' of listening to the recordings is to accommodate the participants who are required to write down their answer whereas it will be too tedious a task for them to write as fast as they listen. Thus, the researcher finds it more adequate to allow the participants to have a second chance at listening to the recordings.

In a report by City and Guilds (2010) as well as Geranpayeh and Taylor (2008), it was also stated that playing the recordings twice will greatly reduce the chance of a test performance being disrupted by unexpected situations such as random noises of a person

sneezing, a car backfires, etcetera. Playing the recordings once will only lead to undue psychological stress on the participants and consequently affects their performance.

On the other hand, Fortune (2004) argues that "in real-world listening situations, we hear the text only once", suggesting how one rarely hears an exact repetition. However, City and Guilds (2010) justifies that while playing the recordings once increase situational authenticity, a test participant is unable to ask for clarification or repetition as in a real-life situation. Thus, it is only fair to give them at the very least, a second chance to listen and clarify what they might have missed. After considering both arguments, the researcher of this study decided to permit repetition of the recordings so as to gain greater balance between demands of authenticity and participants' opportunity to ask for clarification as stated in the report of City and Guilds (2010).

Hence, the research design and methodology of this study have been properly planned and constructed for the purpose of eliciting relevant data to answer the research questions. Figure 3.2 presents the overall methodological framework of the research.

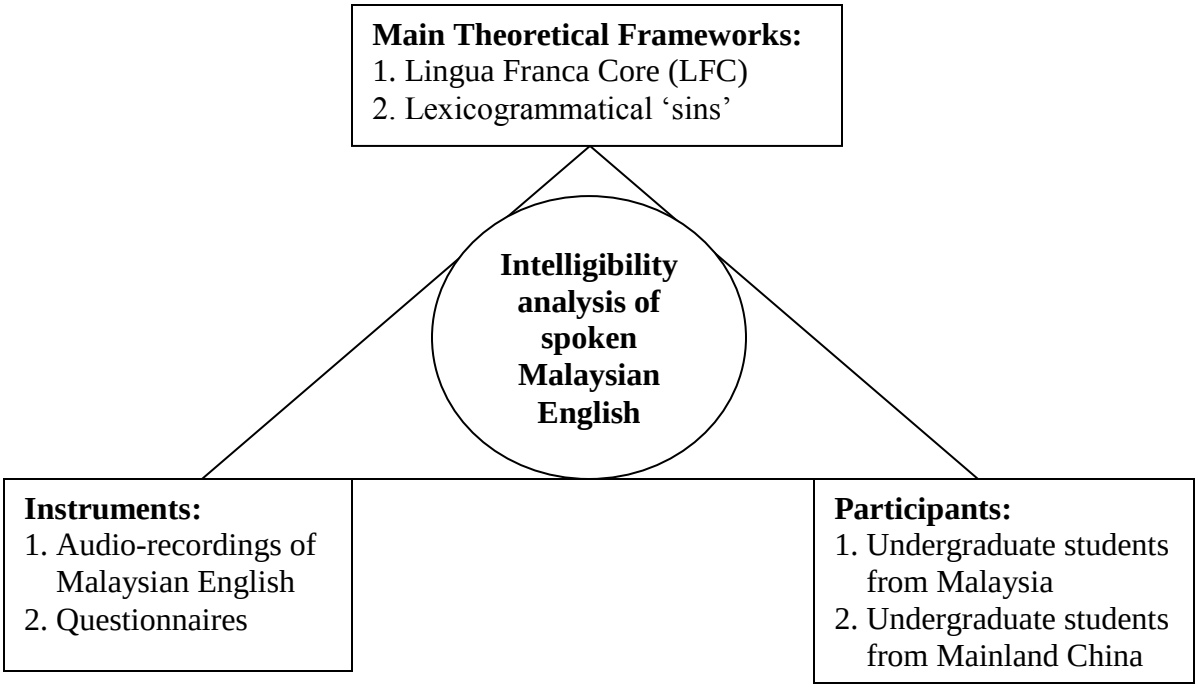


Figure 3.2: Methodological Framework of Research (Perimeter of the study)

### 3.4 Procedures of Data Analysis

This study employs a qualitative analysis. First, the recording extracts are transcribed and analysed based primarily on Jenkins' Lingua Franca Core (1998, 2000, 2002) and Seidlhofer's lexicogrammatical 'sins' (2001a, 2001b) to identify linguistic features of Malaysian English found in the speech of our local participants that deviate from the standard form of English. Any deviation that might lead to misunderstandings will be noted down for later use, including those that are not in both core lists in so as to have a more complete and thorough study covering elements that are not identified in previous research. Identification of these linguistic features of Malaysian English is partly for the purpose of answering Research Question 1 (see section 1.4).

Following that, answers obtained from the sets of questionnaire will be analysed in order to look for occurrences of misunderstandings. Incorrect answers in Section B Question 1 (see section 3.2.2 & Appendix A) are indications of communication breakdowns in terms of word recognition whereas incorrect answers of Question 2 will be considered as problems in interpreting the meaning of the whole message. Non-response will also be marked as incorrect (i.e. intelligibility impeded).

All incorrect answers discovered will be compared to the features of Malaysian English as identified earlier and evaluated with Jenkins' Lingua Franca Core (1998, 2000, 2002) and Seidlhofer's lexicogrammatical 'sins' (2001a, 2001b) in order to investigate whether the linguistic features that cause misunderstandings match those as stated in the core lists.

Besides that, comparisons will also be made between the questionnaire results and the linguistic features found respectively in the speech of the three different ethnic groups (i.e. Malay, Chinese, Indian) to find out if there is any possible correlation between the

English used by the different ethnic groups and intelligibility. The aim of the comparison is to investigate whether nativisation of English by the different ethnic groups play a role in intelligibility (Research Question 2).

### 3.5 Conclusion

In sum, this research is a qualitative study that seeks to explore the effects of Malaysian English on intelligibility. It will look into the different linguistic disciplines such as in terms of phonology, lexicogrammar and semantics. In addition to that, this research will also investigate the possibility of a correlation between ethnicity and intelligibility. The research design of this study is partly adapted from Coetzee-Van Rooy's (2009) research on intelligibility. Meanwhile, the theoretical framework of this study is mainly based on Jenkins' LFC (2000, 2002) and Seidlhofer's lexicogrammatical 'sins' (2001a, 2001b).

# CHAPTER FOUR

# FINDINGS AND DATA ANALYSIS

## 4.0 Introduction

This chapter illustrates the findings of audio-recorded interviews and data analysis of questionnaires on the intelligibility of Malaysian English. There are two main sections to the results. The first section of the findings is a list of Malaysian English features identified from the audio-recorded interviews that are deemed to be potential factors on intelligibility. The second section of the findings is an analysis of the questionnaires answered by the international students from Mainland China. Analysis of questionnaires will be compared to the findings of the first section (features of Malaysian English) in order to investigate the correlation between features of Malaysian English and intelligibility.

## 4.1 Analysis 1: Features of Malaysian English

With considerations to the relationship between Malaysian English and intelligibility, it is important to first identify certain features of Malaysian English as shown in the recordings. The findings in this section are in respect of the first research question while acting as fundamental information prior to the analysis of the second research question.

Identification of phonological features are based on Baskaran's (2005) characterization of Malaysian English pronunciation features in which the identified list is later, compared to Jenkins' Lingua Franca Core (1998, 2000, 2002). Meanwhile, Seidholfer's lexicogrammatical 'sins' (2001a, 2001b), Baskaran's (2005) list of Malaysian English features, Crewe's (1977) Singapore English features, Low Ee Ling and Adam Brown's (2005) English in Singapore as well as Greenbaum and Nelson's (2002) English

grammar are the sources of reference in the determination of any morphosyntactic deviations.

### 4.1.1 Pronunciation Features of Malaysian English

#### 4.1.1.1 *Non-Elision in Weakly-Accented Syllable*

One common feature in Received Pronunciation in which the standard Malaysian English is patterned on (Rajadurai, 2001), is the elision of phonemes in weakly accented syllables. However, the colloquial Malaysian English does not display this kind of feature. Instead, these weak phonemes take on a syllabic role instead of the weak consonant sound in the final position as shown in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1: Examples of Non-Elision in Weakly-Accented Syllable

| Recording | Phrase | Received Pronunciation | Malaysian English |
|---|---|---|---|
| Recording 1 | Travel | /trevl/ | /trevəl/ |
| Recording 2 | Beautiful | /bju:tɪfl/ | /bju:tɪfu:l/ |
| | Continental | /kɒntɪnentl/ | /kɒntɪnentəl/ |
| Recording 3 | People | /pi:pl/ | /pi:ppəl/ |
| Recording 4 | Temple | /templ/ | /tempəl/ |
| | Basically | /beɪsɪkli/ | /beɪsɪkəli/ |
| | Novels | /nɒvls/ | /nɒvəls/ |
| | Example | /ɪgza:mpl/ | /egza:mpəl/ |
| Recording 6 | Temple | /templ/ | /tempəl/ |
| | Vegetable | /vedʒiteɪbl/ | /vedʒiteɪbəl/ |
| | Didn't | /dɪdnt/ | /dɪdən/ |
| | Conversation | /kɒnvəseɪʃn/ | /kɒnvəseɪʃən/ |

#### 4.1.1.2 *Devoicing of Voiced Fricatives*

There is also a tendency in Malaysian English to devoice fricatives such as /v,ð,z,ʒ/ to voiceless fricatives /f,θ,s,ʃ/. This feature can be commonly found in the final position

although the /ʒ,z/ fricatives are also found to have devoiced when they are in medial position (Baskaran, 2005). Table 4.2 shows some examples of devoiced fricatives in Malaysian English.

Table 4.2: Examples of Devoicing of Voiced Fricatives

| Recording | Phrase | Received Pronunciation | Malaysian English |
|---|---|---|---|
| Recording 1 | With | /wɪθ/ | /wɪf/ |
| | Relative | /relətɪv/ | /rɪleɪtɪf/ |
| | Love | /lʌv/ | /lɜf/ |
| | Have | /hæv/ | /hef/ |
| Recording 2 | Those | /ðəʊz/ | /dəʊs/ |
| Recording 4 | Relative | /relətɪv/ | /rɪleɪtɪf/ |
| | Give | /gɪv/ | /gɪf/ |
| Recording 6 | Gave | /geɪv/ | /gef/ |
| | Roses | /rəʊzɪz/ | /rəʊsəs/ |
| | Surprise | /səpraɪz/ | /sʌpraɪs/ |
| | Love | /lʌv/ | /lɜf/ |

#### 4.1.1.3 *Dental Fricative Substitution*

Just as fricatives tend to devoice in the final position, Malaysians are also likely to substitute fricatives /θ/ and /ð/ with the corresponding alveolar plosives /t/ and /d/ (refer to Table 4.3). Acquiring these two fricatives has always been a major problem to most English learners because these sounds do not occur in many languages of the world.

Table 4.3: Examples of Dental Fricative Substitution

| Recording | Phrase | Received Pronunciation | Malaysian English |
|---|---|---|---|
| Recording 1 | That | /ðæt/ | /det/ |
| | Three | /θri:/ | /tri:/ |
| | Think | /θɪŋk/ | /tɪŋ/ |
| Recording 2 | The | /ðə/ | /də/ |
| | Those | /ðəʊz/ | /dəʊs/ |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Their | /ðeə(r)/ | /dɪa/ |
| | With | /wɪθ/ | /wɪt/ |
| | Think | /θɪŋk/ | /tɪŋ/ |
| Recording 3 | There | /ðeə(r)/ | /de/ |
| | Father | /fa:ðə(r)/ | /fadə/ |
| | That | /ðæt/ | /det/ |
| | This | /ðɪs/ | /dɪs/ |
| Recording 4 | With | /wɪθ/ | /wɪt/ |
| | Mothers | /mʌðə(r)s/ | /mʌdəs/ |
| | The | /ðə/ | /də/ |
| | That | /ðæt/ | /det/ |
| | Them | /ðəm/ | /dəm/ |
| Recording 5 | The | /ðə/ | /də/ |
| | Think | /θɪŋk/ | /tɪŋ/ |
| | That | /ðæt/ | /det/ |
| | With | /wɪθ/ | /wɪt/ |
| | Other | /ʌðə(r)/ | /ʌdər/ |
| | Their | /ðeə(r)/ | /dɪa/ |
| Recording 6 | This | /ðɪs/ | /dɪs/ |
| | The | /ðə/ | /də/ |
| | That | /ðæt/ | /det/ |
| | Then | /ðen/ | /den/ |
| | Gather | /gæðə(r)/ | /gedər/ |
| | With | /wɪθ/ | /wɪt/ |
| | Other | /ʌðə(r)/ | /ʌdər/ |
| | Them | /ðəm/ | /dem/ |
| | Think | /θɪŋk/ | /tɪŋ/ |

#### 4.1.1.4 *Unstressed Schwa Substitution*

Another common feature in Malaysian English is the substitution of an unstressed schwa with the full phonetic realization of its orthographic representation. In other words, the orthographic representation of an unstressed schwa is phonetically realized as shown in Table 4.4.

Table 4.4: Examples of Unstressed Schwa Substitution

| Recording | Phrase | Received Pronunciation | Malaysian English |
|---|---|---|---|
| Recording 1 | To | /tə/ | /tu:/ |
| | Communicate | /kəmju:nɪkeɪt/ | /kɒmju:nɪkeɪʔ/ |
| Recording 2 | Hide-and-seek | /haɪd ən si:k/ | /haɪʔ en sɪk/ |
| Recording 3 | Motorbike | /məʊtəbaɪk/ | /mɒtɒbaɪʔ/ |
| Recording 6 | Vegetable | /vedʒtəbl/ | /vedʒiteɪbəl/ |

#### 4.1.1.5 *Vowel Substitution*

Vowel substitution refers to a change in the realization of vowels. There is no regular pattern in the substitution of vowels. As shown in the table below, the vowel /æ/ can be substituted with /e/ (e.g. 'that', 'and') or /ʌ/ (e.g. 'classified). Nevertheless, substitution to the former vowel /e/ is more frequent than the latter /ʌ/.

Table 4.5: Examples of Vowel Substitution

| Recording | Phrase | Received Pronunciation | Malaysian English |
|---|---|---|---|
| Recording 1 | That | /ðæt/ | /det/ |
| | Have | /hæv/ | /hef/ |
| | Love | /lʌv/ | /lɜf/ |
| | Relative | /relətɪv/ | /rɪleɪtɪf/ |
| Recording 2 | Can | /kæn/ | /ken/ |
| | Calligraphy | /kəlɪgrəfi/ | /kalɪgrafi/ |
| | And | /ænd/ | /ɪn/ |
| | Relative | /relətɪv/ | /rɪleɪtɪf/ |
| Recording 3 | That | /ðæt/ | /det/ |
| Recording 4 | That | /ðæt/ | /det/ |
| | Cannot | /kænɒt/ | /kenɒt/ |
| | Actually | /æktʃuəli/ | /ektʃuəli/ |
| | Example | /ɪgza:mpl/ | /egza:mpəl/ |
| | Relative | /relətɪv/ | /rɪleɪtɪf/ |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Recording 5 | That | /ðæt/ | /det/ |
| | Family | /fæməli/ | /feməli/ |
| Recording 6 | That | /ðæt/ | /det/ |
| | Gather | /gæðə(r)/ | /gedər/ |
| | Can | /kæn/ | /ken/ |
| | Have | /hæv/ | /hef/ |
| | Love | /lʌv/ | /lɜf/ |
| | Depends | /dɪpends/ | /dɪpeɪns/ |

#### 4.1.1.6 *Stop Substitution*

In Malaysian English particularly at the basilectal level, words with a stop /p,b,t,d,k,g/ in the final position is often substituted by a glottal stop /ʔ/ as illustrated in Table 4.6.

Table 4.6: Examples of Stop Substitution

| Recording | Phrase | Received Pronunciation | Malaysian English |
|---|---|---|---|
| Recording 1 | About | /əbaʊt/ | /əbaʊʔ/ |
| | Get | /get/ | /geʔ/ |
| | Not | /nɒt/ | /nɒʔ/ |
| | Communicate | /kəmju:nɪkeɪt/ | /kɒmju:nɪkeɪʔ/ |
| Recording 2 | About | /əbaʊt/ | /əbaʊʔ/ |
| | Get | /get/ | /geʔ/ |
| | Eat | /i:t/ | /ɪʔ/ |
| | Hide-and-seek | /haɪd ən si:k/ | /haɪʔ en sɪk/ |
| Recording 3 | Motorbike | /məʊtəbaɪk/ | /mɒtɒbaɪʔ/ |
| | Right | /raɪt/ | /raɪʔ/ |
| | Collide | /kəlaɪd/ | /kɒləʔ/ |
| | Got | /gɒt/ | /gɒʔ/ |
| | Like | /laɪk/ | /laɪʔ/ |
| | Sport | /spɔ:t/ | /spɒʔ/ |
| Recording 4 | Like | /laɪk/ | /laɪʔ/ |
| | About | /əbaʊt/ | /əbaʊʔ/ |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Recording 5 | Like | /laɪk/ | /laɪʔ/ |
| | Speak | /spi:k/ | /spɪʔ/ |
| Recording 6 | That's it | /ðæts⌣ɪt/ | /des⌣ɪʔ/ |
| | Out | /aʊt/ | /aʊʔ/ |
| | Like | /laɪk/ | /laɪʔ/ |
| | Eat | /i:t/ | /ɪʔ/ |

#### 4.1.1.7 *Phoneme(s) Reduction (Cluster Reduction)*

Cluster reduction is a very common feature not only in Malaysian English but also in other varieties of English. When there is a cluster of sounds especially in clusters involving stops and fricatives, it is most likely for a phoneme to be reduced.

An interesting find in this study shows that two Malaysian participants reduced the final lateral approximant /l/ when it is represented orthographically by two consonants 'll' (e.g. footba*ll*, wi*ll*) (marked * in Table 4.7).

Table 4.7: Examples of Phoneme(s) Reduction/ Cluster Reduction

| Recording | Phrase | Received Pronunciation | Malaysian English |
|---|---|---|---|
| Recording 1 | Just | /ʤʌst/ | /ʤa:s/ |
| | Think | /θɪŋk/ | /tɪŋ/ |
| Recording 3 | Fast | /fa:st/ | /fʌs/ |
| | Don't | /dəʊnt/ | /dɒn/ |
| | Left | /left/ | /lef/ |
| | *Football | /fʊbɔ:l/ | /fʊbɒ/ |
| | Kind | /kaɪnd/ | /kain/ |
| Recording 4 | Don't know | /dəʊnt nəʊ/ | /dɒnɔ:/ |
| Recording 5 | Think | /θɪŋk/ | /tɪŋ/ |
| | Most | /məʊst/ | /mɒs/ |
| | Don't | /dəʊnt/ | /dɒn/ |
| Recording 6 | That's it | /ðæts⌣ɪt/ | /des⌣ɪʔ/ |
| | *Will | /wɪl/ | /wɪ/ |
| | Think | /θɪŋk/ | /tɪŋ/ |
| | Context | /kɒntekst/ | /kɒnteks/ |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Don't | /dəʊnt/ | /dʊn/ |
| | Didn't | /dɪdnt/ | /dɪdən/ |
| | Won't | /wɒnt/ | /wɒn/ |
| | Fluent | /fluːənt/ | /fluːən/ |

#### 4.1.1.8 *Shortening of Long Vowels*

The shortening of long vowels (refer to Table 4.8) is another recurrent feature in Malaysian English due to the many languages in Malaysia which do not distinguish vowel length.

Table 4.8: Examples of Shortening of Long Vowels

| Recording | Phrase | Received Pronunciation | Malaysian English |
|---|---|---|---|
| Recording 1 | Water | /wɔːtə(r)/ | /wɒtə/ |
| Recording 2 | Eat | /iːt/ | /ɪʔ/ |
| | Hide-and-seek | /haɪd ən siːk/ | /haɪʔ en sɪk/ |
| Recording 3 | Fast | /faːst/ | /fʌs/ |
| | Football | /fʊbɔːl/ | /fʊbɒ/ |
| | Father | /faːðə(r)/ | /fadə/ |
| | Food | /fuːd/ | /fʊd/ |
| | Speak | /spiːk/ | /spɪʔ/ |
| | Sport | /spɔːt/ | /spɒʔ/ |
| Recording 4 | Food | /fuːd/ | /fʊd/ |
| | Unique | /juniːk/ | /junik/ |
| | Speaking | /spiːkɪŋ/ | /spɪ kɪŋ/ |
| Recording 5 | Speak | /spiːk/ | /spɪʔ/ |
| | Need | /niːd/ | /nɪd/ |
| Recording 6 | Eat | /iːt/ | /ɪʔ/ |
| | Soup | /suːp/ | /sʊp/ |
| | Speaker | /spiːkə(r)/ | /spɪkə/ |

#### 4.1.1.9 *Lengthening of Short Vowels*

Ironically, there are also cases where short vowels are lengthened such as shown in Table 4.9.

Table 4.9: Example of Lengthening of Long Vowels

| Recording | Phrase | Received Pronunciation | Malaysian English |
|---|---|---|---|
| Recording 1 | Just | /ʤʌst/ | /ʤaːs/ |

#### 4.1.1.10 *Reduced Diphthongs*

There is a general tendency to reduce diphthongs in the use of Malaysian English as presented in Table 4.10. Most diphthongs are monophtongized to ease pronunciation.

Table 4.10: Examples of Reduced Diphthongs

| Recording | Phrase | Received Pronunciation | Malaysian English |
|---|---|---|---|
| Recording 1 | Don't | /dəʊnt/ | /dɒn/ |
| Recording 2 | Don't | /dəʊnt/ | /dɒn/ |
| Recording 3 | Motorbike | /məʊtəbaɪk/ | /mɒtɒbaɪʔ/ |
| | Don't | /dəʊnt/ | /dɒn/ |
| | Collide | /kəlaɪd/ | /kɒləʔ/ |
| | There | /ðeə(r)/ | /de/ |
| Recording 4 | Don't | /dəʊnt/ | /dɒn/ |
| | Know | /nəʊ/ | /nɔː/ |
| Recording 5 | Don't | /dəʊnt/ | /dɒn/ |
| | Most | /məʊst/ | /mɒs/ |
| Recording 6 | Gave | /geɪv/ | /gef/ |
| | Don't | /dəʊnt/ | /dɒn/ |

#### 4.1.1.11 *Diphthong Substitution*

While in most cases the diphthong /eə/ is reduced to /e/ (e.g. there, where, hair, heir) in Malaysian English, it is also quite frequent for the diphthong /eə/ in the word 'their' to be

replaced with /ɪa/. Thus, it is common to hear the word 'their' pronounced as /dɪa / instead of /ðeə(r)/ as can be seen in Table 4.11.

Table 4.11: Examples of Diphthong Substitution

| Recording | Phrase | Received Pronunciation | Malaysian English |
|---|---|---|---|
| Recording 2 & Recording 5 | Their | /ðeə(r)/ | /dɪa/ |

#### 4.1.1.12 *Glide Insertion*

In a study by Lim Siew Siew and Low Ee Ling (2005), it was discovered that Singaporeans tend to 'pronounce triphthongs as two syllables with a glide /j/ or /w/ usually inserted at the onset of the second syllable'. Meanwhile, this study has also revealed the same pattern in the speech of Malaysians as illustrated in Table 4.12.

Table 4.12: Examples of Glide Insertion

| Recording | Phrase | Received Pronunciation | Malaysian English |
|---|---|---|---|
| Recording 3 | Our | /aʊə(r)/ | /awə/ |
| Recording 4 | Tower | /taʊə(r)/ | /taʊwəl/ |

#### 4.1.1.13 *Syllable(s) Reduction*

Syllable reduction is not as common as vowel or consonant reduction. Unconventional as it may, Malaysians sometimes delete a syllable of a word for the ease of pronunciation regardless of any semantic changes that might occur. An example is as shown in Table 4.13 where the pronunciation of the word 'already' /ɔ:lredi/ is reduced to sound like 'ready'/redi/, a word that has a totally different meaning.

Table 4.13: Example of Syllable(s) Reduction

| Recording | Phrase | Received Pronunciation | Malaysian English |
|---|---|---|---|
| Recording 4 | Already | /ɔ:lredi/ | /redi/ |

#### 4.1.1.14 *Secondary Phoneme Substitution*

According to Baskaran (2005), certain phonemes of the English language do not exist in other languages. This resulted in the substitution of these phonemes with a secondary phoneme, that is, the sound nearest to the system of the speaker's own language (refer to Table 4.14).

Table 4.14: Example of Secondary Phoneme Substitution

| Recording | Phrase | Received Pronunciation | Malaysian English |
|---|---|---|---|
| Recording 4 | Tower | /taʊə(r)/ | /taʊwəl/ |

### 4.1.2 Lexicogrammatical Features of Malaysian English

#### 4.1.2.1 *Null Subject/ Object*

Similar to Singapore English, Malaysian English is often characterized by its missing grammatical subject or object in a sentence structure. The missing subject/object can be called a *null subject/object* which is represented with the symbol Ø as shown in the examples below (refer to Table 4.15). Omission of subject/object happens particularly when the omitted subject or object is said to be recoverable from the context ( Low, E.L. and Brown, A., 2005). The term *context* here could be referred to information that has been mentioned in the preceding text, non-linguistic information of the situation in which the utterance takes place (e.g. *situational context*) or both. The subject/ object which seemingly only fulfill a dummy function, is thus, more likely to be dropped to avoid redundancy. This phenomenon of dropping the subject is also commonly known as *pro-drop*.

Table 4.15: Examples of Null Subject/ Object

| Recording | Phrase |
|---|---|
| Recording 1 | Ø going travel<br>(I) going travel |
| | Ø playing congkak |

| | |
|---|---|
| | (I) playing congkak |
| | Ø have peace<br>(Malaysia) have peace |
| Recording 2 | What's Ø call?<br>What's (it) call? |
| Recording 4 | Other than that, Ø go uh outing uh…<br>Other than that, (I) go uh outing uh… |
| | Okay because Ø is um, one of the festival we can uh…<br>Okay because (it) is um, one of the festival we can uh… |
| | It is very enjoyable because Ø a lot of relative…<br>It is very enjoyable because (there are) a lot of relative… |
| | Um, basically Ø means um…<br>Um, basically (it) means um… |
| | That is uh, one of the unique Ø …<br>That is uh, one the unique (qualities)… |
| | Because Ø some error…<br>Because (there are) some error… |
| Recording 5 | I think maybe, uh, Ø parental exposure since Ø small<br>I think maybe, uh, (it's) parental exposure since (I was) small |
| Recording 6 | In Chinese New Year, um, Ø chit-chatting with them<br>In Chinese New Year, um, (we'll) chit-chatting with them |
| | Ø Interested in cooking<br>(I'm) interested in cooking |
| | Uh, Ø playing skipping rope<br>Uh, (I) playing skipping rope |
| | Because Ø no others game Ø can play<br>Because (there are) no other games (we) can play |

#### 4.1.2.2 *Tenses and Affixation*

English is predominantly a tense language whereas Chinese is an aspect language (Wang, 1943; Gao, 1948: Gong,1991; Norman, 1982). As such, it generally means that while in English, tenses are marked by distinctive tense inflections, Chinese does not have any overt tense or agreement morphology (Xiao, Z.H. and McEnery, T, 2002). Similar to Chinese, the Malay language also portrays a lack of overt forms that mark tenses (Mininni and Manuti, 2012, p.178) . The concept of tense is either indicated by content words such as temporal

adverbials or it is recoverable by contexts. English, on the other hand, grammatically marks tense in the form of verbal inflection. The many differences in the marking of temporal notions in English and other languages thus, appear to be confusing and unfamiliar for L2 English learners especially those whose mother tongue does not grammaticalised verbs as tense markers. As shown in the examples below, some Malaysians are found to have problems not just with the temporal deixis of an event but also with the grammaticalization of tense such as that of the "-*ing*" suffixation.

Table 4.16: Examples of Tenses and Affixation in Malaysian English

| Recording | Phrase |
|---|---|
| Recording 1 | Going (*Went*) by bus |
| | When I'm (*I was*) in Form 3 |
| Recording 2 | After I get (*got*) my result) |
| | What's call(*-ed*)? |
| Recording 3 | When I was uh, 9 years old uh, there is (*was*)…occur(*-ed*) |
| | There is (*was*) uh, one motorbike, was uh, he's (*was*) very,… |
| | And then uh, I don't (*didn't*)… |
| Recording 4 | …and can helping (*help*) mothers |
| | After that we go for the friend house to celebrating (*celebrate*) the… |
| Recording 5 | …uh we do every year like go to temple praying (*to pray*) and eating (*to eat*) with our family |
| | I surf the net and, uh reading (*read*) comics and books |
| | As far as I'm concern(*-ed*) I think… |
| | It's okay for one understand what uh, the other speak (*is speaking*) |
| Recording 6 | No, he bring (*brought*) me to a restaurant |
| | …will come to my house and we (*will*) gather, and actually we uh, (*will*) meet each other |
| | …we, going (*will go*) out |
| | …uh, playing skipping rope (*I play rope skipping*) |
| | …I don't (*didn't*) use English everyday |

#### 4.1.2.3 *Subject-Verb Agreement*

Besides temporal indications describing when an event takes place (past, present, future), English verbs in the non-past tense also conjugates with its clause subject in order to provide additional information such as the plurality represented by a noun. This conjugation between the verb and subject is called an agreement. Although the subject-verb

agreement is of paramount importance, most cases show that it is not a rule abided strictly in Malaysian English especially for those who find it difficult to follow the rule as can be seen from the examples in Table 4.17.

Table 4.17: Examples of Subject-Verb Agreement in Malaysian English

| Recording | Phrase |
|---|---|
| Recording 1 | Malaysia have (has) a peaceful… |
| Recording 2 | …because it show(-s) the beautiful… |
| | Malaysia is uh one country that have (has) many races. |
| | No, I don't think so because it need(-s)… |
| Recording 3 | So, uh, my father also like(-s) football and then, he uh, bring(-s) me to.. |
| | In my opinion, uh, we, uhm uh does (do) uh, not… |
| Recording 5 | It's okay for one understand(-s)… |

#### 4.1.2.4 *Plural " -s"*

Another type of morphology inflection that seems to be a common feature found in the recording speech of Malaysian English is the plural marking of suffix "-s". As illustrated in Table 4.18, five out of six of the Malaysian participants in this study do not follow the grammar of plural marking, either pluralizing singular nouns with the plural suffix "-s" or dropping the suffix for a plural noun. Interestingly, all of the participants who mentioned the word "relative", used the singular form instead of the plural form to describe the group. Note that the symbol (~~s~~) represents the pluralizing of singular nouns whereas the symbol (-s) refers to the dropping of plural suffix "-s".

Table 4.18: Examples in the Use of Plural "-s" in Malaysian English

| Recording | Phrase |
|---|---|
| Recording 1 | All of us are relative(-s) |
| Recording 2 | We can meet uh, relative(-s), we can go to their house(-s) |
| Recording 3 | …many kind(-s) of food. |
| | It is a, uh, traditional game(~~s~~) like uh, um… |
| | There are many kind(-s) of apa? |
| Recording 4 | a good friendship when secondary school(~~s~~) |
| | one of the festival(-s) we can uh, enjoy…helping mother(~~s~~) |
| | …because a lot of relative(-s) |
| | …some biscuits or some Muruku for the relative(-s) |

| | |
|---|---|
| | …for example we also got some grammatical error(-s) |
| | I'm reading Malay(~~s~~) novels |
| Recording 6 | …all my relative(-s) will come to… |

#### 4.1.2.5 *Multi-Word Verbs*

Multi-word verbs are combinations of a verb and another word(s), usually a particle, in which they behave as a single verb. The combinations form phrasal verbs, prepositional verbs as well as phrasal-prepositional verbs. Depending on which particles the verbs are combined with, they can have different meanings. Thus, 'look into', 'look at', 'look after' and 'look for' are very much different semantically. A complicating factor for learners is to determine which particle is to be used with the verbs. In Malaysia, there is a tendency for the occurrence of a mismatch of verb and particle, a redundancy of preposition or a missing preposition particularly when the interlocutor faces confusion over phrasal verbs (refer to Table 4.19).

Table 4.19: Examples of Multi-Word Verbs in Malaysian English

| Recording | Phrase | Remark |
|---|---|---|
| Recording 1 | I visit ~~to~~ my relative… | redundant preposition |
| | Communicate to (with) each other | mismatch |
| Recording 5 | …and their tolerance with (towards) each other | mismatch |

#### 4.1.2.6 *Word Classes*

Word classes, or traditionally known as parts of speech, are categories to which all words belong in according to the role they play in a sentence. Normally, each category has its own characteristics or takes a distinctive form that distinguishes it from the other. For instance, an adverb frequently ends with the suffix *–ly*. However, there are also adverbs that do not take this form such as *never*, *often*, *everyday*, *yet*, etc. Knowing the class of a word could help determining the morphological changes a word could undergo. A verb, for an example, could take the progressive suffix *–ing* but not an adjective or adverb. Nevertheless, in

Malaysia, it is common to hear the utterance "I am boring" instead of "I am bored" or "I am interesting" to actually mean "I am interested". Similarly, in this study, one of the Malaysian participants used "I feel so touching" instead of "touched" (refer to Table 4.20) which consequently changes the meaning of the whole utterance.

Table 4.20: Examples of Word Classes in Malaysian English

| Recording | Phrase | Change of word class |
|---|---|---|
| Recording 2 | …because it show the beautiful (beauty) of life. | N →Adj. |
| Recording 5 | I think that's not necessarily (necessary). | Adj. → Adv. |
| Recording 6 | …feel so touched, touching (touched). | Adj. →V+-ing |
| | Because no others (other) game. | Adj. →N |

#### 4.1.2.7 *Copula 'be'*

A look at the verb system will throw further light on the variation of copula 'be' in Malaysian English. As shown in Table 4.21, there is a tendency to drop the copula 'be'/ helping verbs, seeing most of the Malaysian participants in this study dropping the 'be' verb in their utterances. Besides that, there are also examples of inappropriate use of the auxiliaries.

Table 4.21: Examples in the Use of Copula "be" in Malaysian English

| Recording | Phrase |
|---|---|
| Recording 2 | My favourite hobby, uh, (is) writing Arabic calligraphy. |
| | We ~~don't~~ (aren't) like um, you,.. |
| Recording 3 | When I uh (was), cycling uh,… |
| | He uh, uh (will) bring me to stadium. |
| | In Malaysia, there ~~have~~ (are) um, many uh,… |
| Recording 5 | I have not (been) exposed too much to… |
| Recording 6 | Mm. I think it ~~is~~ uh, depends on… |

#### 4.1.2.8 *Articles*

According to Baskaran (2005), article ellipsis only occurs with the condition of 'having a modifier in complementary distribution with an article before abstract nouns'. In other words, such ellipsis can only be found under two conditions: i) It is an abstract noun, and ii)

There is a corresponding modifier before the noun. Thus, article ellipsis does not occur if an abstract noun is on its own without a pre-modifier. The result of this study, however, shows otherwise. It is discovered that there are several cases of article ellipsis found in phrases where the nouns are without a pre-modifier. It seems that article is dropped regardless of the types of noun used or the presence of a modifier. The same occurs with other determiners such as the elipsis of possessive '*my*' in the utterances 'my childhood' and 'my favourite games'. (refer to Table 4.22).

Besides ellipsis, there are also cases of using a definite article in the place of an indefinite article. This can be seen in the use of article '*the*' in the phrase 'the friend's house' although it has never been mentioned before.

Table 4.22: Examples in the Use of Articles in Malaysian English

| Recording | Phrase |
|---|---|
| Recording 2 | We don't like um, you, uh, (the) British. |
| Recording 3 | …bring me to (the) stadium and look uh, (a) match. |
| Recording 4 | (a) memorable incident… |
| | …like (a) picnic at the beach |
| | After that we go for ~~the~~ (a) friend house |
| | Play (the) see-saw |
| | Mm…and, some of the buildings, uh for (an) example (the) T-towers |
| Recording 5 | Uh, (the) most memorable incident I've seen,…in (the) past year. |
| | …go to (a) temple praying and eating… |
| | It's been one of (my) favourite games. |
| | …during (my) childhood I've been playing… |
| | …(the) integrity of the races |
| Recording 6 | …my boyfriend uh, gave me ~~the~~ roses |

#### 4.1.2.9 *Confusing Words*

Some words can be confusing in that they seem to have the same meaning but are actually used differently. An example can be seen in this study where a Malaysian participant used the word 'look' to mean 'watch'. As both words are about the sense of sight, they can easily confuse learners. Although nowadays this grammatical rule is followed loosely

where we frequently find the words ‘look’, ‘watch’ and also ‘see’ used interchangeably (e.g. ‘I watched a movie’ or ‘I saw a movie’), these words actually have their own distinctive meanings. The word ‘see’ is when something comes into sight. It may not be deliberate and minimum effort is put into seeing something. The word ‘look’, on the other hand, requires more effort in concentrating our eyes on something and it is an action with an intention to look. The word ‘watch’ is similar to ‘look’ where effort is needed but with more intensity and concentration on the details such as watching the movements and changes.

Similarly, one of the Malaysian participants appears to be confused with the word ‘pay’. While the word ‘pay’ may be defined as ‘to give’ (e.g. pay attention) or ‘to result in a profit’ (e.g. “it pays to keep up with your work”), there are semantical restrictions as to what extent it can replace the word ‘give’. As shown in the example in Table 4.23, reckless usage of words could cause anomalies and oddities in the whole construction.

Table 4.23: Examples of Confusing Words

| Recording | Phrase |
|---|---|
| Recording 3 | …bring me to stadium and **look** (watch) uh, match |
| Recording 4 | …**pay** (gives) a good image… |

#### 4.1.2.10 *Overuse of ‘like’ and ‘like that’*

In Malaysia, it is not uncommon to hear the phrase ‘like’ or ‘like that’ (refer to Table 4.24). When Malaysian speakers face problems in finding the right words to express themselves, they tend to overuse the word ‘like’ or the general statement ‘like that’ which does not seem to refer to any specific entity or phenomenon. These general statements are used merely to fill up and complete the sentence structure they started, but without contributing any substantial meaning to the content of the discourse brought up.

Table 4.24: Examples of Overuse of 'like' and 'like that'

| Recording | Phrase |
|---|---|
| Recording 3 | *Like* in…got that way lah. |
| Recording 4 | …um, temple any occasions, *like that* |
| | …and can improve my imagination *like that* |
| | …for example, we also got some grammatical error, *like that*. |
| Recording 6 | …depends on the context, because *like like*, for me, I don't have the context… |

#### 4.1.2.11 *Prepositions*

The use of prepositions has always been 'notoriously unstable' (Crewe, 1977). Prepositions are found to have great variations even in Standard English usage where a wide range of possible alternatives can be used in the same sentence construction. For instance, the preposition 'about' in 'she consulted him about the matter' can be replaced with the prepositions 'over', 'on', 'regarding', 'concerning', etcetera. The instability of the prepositions, as expected, seems to have influenced the speech of Malaysian English, leading to odd use of the prepositions as can be seen in Table 4.25.

Table 4.25: Examples in the Use of Prepositions in Malaysian English

| Recording | Phrase | Remark |
|---|---|---|
| Recording 4 | A good friendship *when* (in/during) secondary schools… | Odd use of preposition |
| | *At* (in the) morning, we pray. | Odd use of preposition |
| | I go *for* (to) the playground. | Odd use of preposition |
| | go (for an) outing uh (at) any interesting places. | Missing preposition |
| | …and (at) night, we will play with uh, fireworks. | Missing preposition |
| Recording 6 | Actually we uh, meet each other uh, once ~~in~~ a year. | Redundant preposition |

#### 4.1.2.12 *Adverbial Positioning*

In English, the positioning of adverbials can be very complicated. There is no explicit or simple rule to explain where an adverb should be positioned in a sentence. In fact, the complications of adverbial positioning are endless (Crewe, 1977). While in Chinese, most adverbials are placed before the main verb (Li and Thompson, 1981), in English, adverbials could take a pre-verbal or post-verbal position. There may be no explicit rule to adverbial positioning in English but two characteristics can be said about it (Crewe, 1977): i) common adverbs are usually placed before the main verb, ii) adverbs do not usually occur between the verb and the object. Malaysians, nonetheless, tend to disregard both of these rules as shown in Table 4.26.

Table 4.26: Examples of Adverbial Positioning in Malaysian English

| Recording | Phrase |
|---|---|
| Recording 4 | …a lot of food we *can taste also* on that day<br>(…a lot of food we *can also taste* on that day) |
| | I *forget already* the game<br>(I've *already forgotten* the game) |

#### 4.1.2.13 *Omission of Possessive 's*

When we want to indicate the possession of a noun or a noun phrase, suffixation of a possessive morpheme *'s* is normally made. Although omission of the possesive 's is not commonly found in Malaysian English, it is a feature that can be sometimes found in the speech of Malaysians particularly in the basilectal English of Malaysian learners (refer to Table 4.27).

Table 4.27: Examples of Omission of Possessive 's

| Recording | Phrase |
|---|---|
| Recording 4 | After that we go for the friend('s) house… |
| Recording 6 | Mm…This year('s) Valentines |

#### 4.1.2.14 *Parallelism*

Parallelism requires the coordinated clauses in a compound sentence to reach a balance between the units involved. In other words, the coordinated counterparts must be similar in form. Malaysian English in this regard, is versatile in that the coordinated clauses within the same sentence structure may be dissimilar in type as shown in Table 4.28.

Table 4.28: Examples of Parallelism in Malaysian English

| Recording | Phrase |
|---|---|
| Recording 4 | ① *verb phrase* ② *noun phrase*<br>For examples,…**picnic at the beach**, um (and), **temple, any occasional** |
| | After that we go for the friend house…and night, we ~~**will**~~ play with uh, fireworks. (*tenses parallelism*) |

#### 4.1.2.15 *Connectors*

Connectors or linkers ensure smooth flow of sentence construction. However, it was found that Malaysians sometimes drop the connectors for the ease of English usage (refer to Table 4.29).

Table 4.29: Examples in the Use of Connectors in Malaysian English

| Recording | Phrase |
|---|---|
| Recording 4 | …because is um, one of the festival (when) we can uh, enjoy with our family |
| Recording 5 | It's okay for (as long as) one understand what's uh, at the other speak English |

#### 4.1.2.16 *Comparative Constructions*

The comparison of two things is usually marked by words like 'as…as', 'compared with/to', 'such as', 'like', etcetera. While one of these could be used, it is unlikely to use a combination or blend of these comparative markers. Malaysians, on the other hand, seem to find it acceptable to have such a blend of comparative markers. An example is as shown in

Table 4.30 where a Malaysian participant uses 'as…like' which is a combination of comparative words 'as…as' and 'like'.

Table 4.30: Examples of Comparative Constructions in Malaysian English

| Recording | Phrase |
|---|---|
| Recording 6 | **As** flue-, fluent **like** a… |

#### 4.1.2.17 *Discourse Particles*

One of the most prominent and representative features of Malaysian English is none other than the use of discourse particles. Some of the commonest particles in Malaysian English include 'lah', 'one', 'man' and 'what' (Baskaran, 2005). These particles stand for a range of functions depending on its intonation patterns. Different intonation in pronouncing these particles gives a different meaning but it does not have any direct semantic effect on the utterance with it being rather pragmatical than semantical. As expected, discourse particles are discovered in the speech of the Malaysian participants of this study as shown in Table 4.31.

Table 4.31: Examples of Discourse Particles in Malaysian English

| Recording | Phrase | Remark |
|---|---|---|
| Recording 3 | …got that way *lah*. | Particle 'lah' is used to strengthen an assertion. |
| | …my father also like football and *then*, he uh, uh bring me to stadium | The word 'then' is a particle synonymous with 'so' or 'therefore'. It is used to emphasize on the outcome of an action previously mentioned. |
| Recording 4 | …um, temple any occasions, *like that* | Particle 'like that' is used to add vividness. |
| | …and can improve my imagination *like that* | |
| | …for example, we also got some grammatical error, *like that*. | |
| Recording 5 | …the one I celebrate most is Deepavali *lah*. | Particle 'lah' is used to assert the obvious. |

#### 4.1.2.18 *Code-Switching*

Code-switching refers to the "alternative use of two languages" (Haugen, 1956) or as described by Marasigan (1983), it is the use of two languages in the same sentence or discourse. Hybridization of mother tongue in English is becoming more prevalent in New Englishes especially in multilingual societies as more local lexical items are introduced as an integral part of English. These borrowed lexical items play multiple functions such as to build solidarity, to exclude others, to practice power and to maintain authenticity of the original source (David, 2001; Kow, 2003).

Such wide borrowings from local languages in English have brought about nativized varieties of English. What has initially started as a contact language used due to low competence of English, code-switches now also perform the function as an identity marker with its culturally-loaded characteristic.

From the data collected (refer to Table 4.32), it is clear that code-switches or lexical borrowings occur mainly to express culturally related ideas which normally do not have an English equivalent. In the case where some culturally-loaded words have an English equivalent such as 'angpow' (red packet) and 'gasing' (spinning top), the mother tongue form is still the preferred language to be used.

Table 4.32: Examples of Code-Switching

| Recording | Phrase |
|---|---|
| Recording 1 | ...because I can get **angpow**. (*red packet*) |
| | …we went to **Langkawi**. (*a tourist spot in Malaysia*) |
| | Playing **congkak**. (*a Malay traditional game*) |
| Recording 2 | What I like about **Hari Raya** (*a festival celebrated by Muslims*) is… |
| | For example, **Lemang**, uh, **Rendang**…(*Malaysian food*) |
| | **Congkak** (*a Malay traditional game*) |
| | …we don't, **apa**? |
| Recording 3 | Uh, **gasing**. (*a Malay traditional game*) |
| | …there are many kind of **apa**? (*what is it?*) |
| | …got that way **lah**. (*a suffix borrowed from Malay and Chinese*) |
| Recording 4 | My favourite festival is **Deepavali**. (*a festival celebrated by Indians*) |

| | |
|---|---|
| | …give some biscuits or **Muruku** (*a type of Indian traditional snack*) |
| | …for example **T-Towers** (*Twin Towers, a tourist spot in Malaysia*) |
| Recording 5 | …the one I celebrate the most is **Deepavali** (*a festival celebrated by Indians*) lah. |
| Recording 6 | To temple. Uh, **Tian Hou Gong** (*or Thean Hou Temple is a type of Chinese temple*) |

### 4.2 Intelligibility and Comprehensibility of Malaysian English

In Section 4.1, we have seen the features of Malaysian English that are potential to unintelligibility. In this section, the features as identified earlier will be compared to the questionnaire answered by the international students from Mainland China in order to investigate the type of features that are prone to causing misunderstandings. It is also in this section that the aforementioned two research questions will be answered.

For each recording, the results for Question 1 imply recognition of a word or utterance whereas results for Question 2 indicate the Chinese international students' understandings of the interlocutors' intention.

#### 4.2.1 Findings & Analysis of Recording 1:

In this section, findings based on Recording 1 that are collected from the questionnaires answered by the Chinese international participants will be examined and analysed.

##### 4.2.1.1 *Question 1 Results and Analysis*

Table 4.33: Recording 1 Question 1 Results (Test of Intelligibility)

| Question 1 / Participant | (i) | | (ii) | (iii) | | (iv) | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | (a) | (b) | | (a) | (b) | (a) | (b) |
| 1 | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ |
| 2 | √ | | √ | | √ | √ | √ |
| 3 | | | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ |
| 4 | √ | | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ |
| 5 | √ | | √ | | √ | √ | √ |

| | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 6 | | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ |
| 7 | √ | | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ |
| 8 | √ | √ | | √ | √ | √ | √ |
| 9 | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ |
| 10 | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ |
| 11 | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ |
| 12 | √ | | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ |
| 13 | √ | | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ |
| 14 | √ | | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ |
| 15 | √ | | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ |
| 16 | √ | | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ |
| 17 | √ | | | | √ | √ | √ |
| 18 | √ | | | | √ | | √ |
| 19 | √ | | | √ | | √ | √ |
| 20 | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ |
| Total | 18 | 7 | 16 | 16 | 19 | 19 | 20 |

Based on Table 4.33, it is discovered that most of the international participants from China are unable to recognize the word ‘relative’ which is pronounced /rɪleɪtɪf/ instead of /relətɪv/ in the Malaysian English speech extract. Devoicing of final consonant sound /v/, vowel substitution of first vowel /e/ to /ɪ/ as well as lengthening of mid schwa /ə/ to a diphthong /eɪ/ have changed the overall pronunciation of the word. The various changes apparently have cumulative effect on intelligibility as more than half of the participants could not recognize the word. Several participants perceived the word as ‘elective’ which sounds similar to the Malaysian pronunciation /rɪleɪtɪf/ without the rhotic /r/. It is though unknown as to why the rhoticity of the first consonant sound is not perceived.

Most people do not seem to encounter any problems in recognizing the phrases ‘travel’, ‘love water’, ‘three’, ’peaceful’ and ‘don’t think so’ as there are less than five participants who did not manage to score in the respective questions. Comprehensibility of words such as ‘three’ and ‘think’ appear to be in line with Jenkins’ LFC (1998, 2000, 2002)

which stated that substitutions of dental fricatives /θ/ and /ð/ are acceptable because they are intelligible in an EIL context.

It is also not much of a difficulty in recognizing the word 'love' which has undergone vowel substitution and devoicing of voiced fricatives (/lʌv/→/lɜf/). Although the overall pronunciation has changed, it is on the whole, intelligible to the participants. This may be the case of what Brown (1991a) described as high-frequency of occurrences where the frequency of the pronunciation /lɜf/ is high and thus, increases familiarity of the word. Intelligibility is thus, unlikely to be reduced.

On the other hand, findings of the word 'water' contradict with Jenkins' LFC (1998, 2000, 2002). According to the core list, the contrast between long and short vowels must be maintained in order to ensure intelligibility. The result of this study however, shows otherwise. The word 'water' which has a reduced /ɔ:/ (/wɔ:tə(r)/→ /wɒtə/), is found to be recognizable by most participants.

It is also discovered that every participant is able to understand the word 'communicate' despite it being pronounced /kɒmju:nɪkeɪʔ/with a stop substitution of the final consonant sound as well as the full realization of the unstressed schwa of the first syllable. This has proven that stop substitution and full realization of a weak schwa do little in hampering communication.

### *4.2.1.2 Question 2 Results and Analysis*

Table 4.34: Recording 1 Question 2 Results (Test of Comprehensibility and Interpretability)

| Question 2 / Participant | (i) [2m] | (ii) [3m] | (iii) [3m] | (iv) [1m] | (v) [2m] | (vi) [2m] | Total [13m] |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 1M | 1M | 1M | 0 | 1M | 1M,1E | 6m |
| 2 | 1M,1E | 0 | 1M | 0 | 1M | 0 | 4m |
| 3 | 1E | 1M | 1M | 0 | 0 | 1E | 4m |
| 4 | 1M,1E | 1M,1E | 1M,2E | 0 | 2M | 1M,1E | 11m |
| 5 | 1M | 1M | 1M, 2E | 0 | 1M | 1E | 7m |
| 6 | 1M | 1M, 1E | 1M, 1E | 0 | 2M | 1E | 8m |
| 7 | 1M, 1E | 1M | 1M, 1E | 0 | 1M | 0 | 6m |
| 8 | 1M | 1M | 1M | 0 | 1M | 0 | 4m |
| 9 | 1M,1E | 1M | 1M,2E | 0 | 2M | 1M,1E | 10m |
| 10 | 1M,1E | 1M,2E | 1M,2E | 0 | 2M | 1M,1E | 12m |
| 11 | 1E | 1M,1E | 1M,2E | 0 | 2M | 1M,1E | 10m |
| 12 | 1M,1E | 1M | 1M,2E | 0 | 2M | 1M,1E | 10m |
| 13 | 0 | 0 | 1M | 0 | 2M | 0 | 3m |
| 14 | 1M,1E | 1M | 1M,1E | 0 | 0 | 1M,1E | 7m |
| 15 | 1M,1E | 1M | 1M,1E | 0 | 2M | 1M,1E | 9m |
| 16 | 1M | 1M | 1M,1E | 0 | 1M | 1M | 6m |
| 17 | 1M | 0 | 1M,1E | 0 | 0 | 1M,1E | 5m |
| 18 | 1M | 1M | 1M | 0 | 2M | 1M,1E | 7m |
| 19 | 1M | 1M | 1M | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3m |
| 20 | 1M | 1M | 1M | 0 | 1M | 0 | 4m |

* m: marks M: main point E: elaboration

Undeniably, one of the most prominent results from Table 4.34 is none other than the communication breakdown in Question 2(iv). None of the international participants appear to comprehend the Malaysian student's description of *congkak* being his favourite childhood game. Such a result is not surprising as *congkak*, a Malay traditional game, is a culturally-loaded word. Hence, the word is unlikely to be intelligible to international students unless they are familiar with the traditional games and culture of the Malay ethnic group in Malaysia.

Deterding (2006) and Bent and Bradlow (2003) speak of ‘shared features’ being attributive to intelligibility due to familiarity with each other’s language. Naturally, shared language and culture also aid comprehension of English even between speakers of different nationality. This theory as asserted by Deterding as well as Bent and Bradlow turns to be true as the data in this study reveals most participants who heard the word ‘angpow’ could understand what it is. One of the participants has even written down the Chinese pinyin ‘hong bao’ to show her understanding of the word. Apart from this example, the last international participant has also answered ‘Spring festival’ to Question 2(ii) which is another word for ‘Chinese New Year’, again proving the international participant’s understanding of the Malaysian student’s favourite festival. This shared culture and language or ‘commonalities’ between the participants from Mainland China and Malaysia who are both Chinese, undoubtedly improves intelligibility.

In terms of lexicogrammar, the data in this study proves the accuracy of one of Seidlhofer’s (2001) lexicogrammatical ‘sins’. According to the data, violation of the subject-verb agreement does not cause miscommunication. The majority of the Chinese international students are found to be able to interpret the meaning of the utterance “Malaysia have peace” despite the verb ‘have’ does not concord with the subject ‘Malaysia’.

### 4.2.2 Findings & Analysis of Recording 2

In this section, findings based on Recording 2 that are collected from the questionnaires answered by the Chinese international participants will be examined and analysed.

#### 4.2.2.1 *Question 1 Results and Analysis*

Table 4.35: Recording 2 Question 1 Results (Test of Intelligibility)

| Question 1 / Participant | (i) | | | (ii) | (iii) | (iv) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | (a) | (b) | (c) | | | |
| 1 | √ | √ | √ | | | |
| 2 | | | √ | | | √ |
| 3 | | | | | | |
| 4 | √ | √ | √ | | | √ |
| 5 | | √ | √ | | | |
| 6 | √ | √ | √ | √ | | |
| 7 | √ | | √ | √ | | √ |
| 8 | √ | √ | √ | | | |
| 9 | √ | | √ | | | √ |
| 10 | √ | √ | √ | | | √ |
| 11 | √ | √ | √ | | √ | √ |
| 12 | √ | √ | √ | √ | | √ |
| 13 | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ |
| 14 | √ | | √ | | | √ |
| 15 | √ | √ | √ | √ | | √ |
| 16 | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ |
| 17 | √ | √ | √ | | | √ |
| 18 | √ | √ | √ | | √ | |
| 19 | | √ | √ | | | |
| 20 | | | √ | | | |
| Total | 15 | 14 | 19 | 6 | 4 | 12 |

Analysis of Recording 2 Question 1 reveals some interesting information. Two phrases emerge as problematic to the Chinese participants as these international students underperformed in both Question 1(ii) and 1(iii). Question (iii) has only a meager number of four participants scoring the question whereas Question (ii) has only six scorers.

In Question (iii), almost all the Chinese listeners heard “INC” instead of the phrase “hide-and-seek” as spoken by the Malaysian speaker to describe his favourite traditional game. It is however, not surprising for miscommunication to occur in this case, judging by the way the phrase “hide-and-seek” is pronounced that could have rendered it incomprehensible.

First, the use of a glottal stop replacing the consonant sound /d/ in 'hide' (/haɪd/→ /haɪʔ/) is detrimental to losing vowel length. As a result, the vowel sound preceding the glottal stop is shortened, giving the word a staccato effect which makes the word sound like the letter "I". As clarified by Rajadurai (2006), the use of glottal stops per se may not cause unintelligibility but its effect on vowel length could make it potentially problematic in the speech of Malaysians.

Rajadurai's clarification is explanatory of Question 1(i)(c) in which case the word 'eat' does not cause any intelligibility problems albeit it undergoing stop substitution as well. As illustrated in Table 37, 19 out of 20 Chinese listeners are able to recognize the word.

Besides stop substitution, vowel substitution and shortening of long vowels could also be attributive to misinterpretation of the phrase 'hide-and-seek'. In pronouncing the words 'and' and 'seek', substitution of the vowel sound in "and' with the phoneme /e/ and shortening of the long vowel in 'seek' have both resulted in the words to sound like the letters "N" and "C" respectively. With the phrase undergoing major changes, it is hence, reasonable to see most participants mishearing it as "INC".

In the case of Question 1(ii), majority of the participants did not manage to make out the phrase 'calligraphy' which is pronounced /kalɪgrafi/ instead of /kəlɪgrəfi/ by the Malaysian speaker. The vowel substitutions with the vowel sounds realized fully according to its orthographic form is a typical example of Malay language influence. Although some of the Chinese listeners admitted to not knowing the word, judging by the answers given, it seems that substitution of the vowels is still significantly interrupting the listener from registering the phrase. Meanwhile, a couple of participants who could not

spell the word, attempted to show their understanding of the utterance by using their own way of explanation, either by using an alternative word or writing it down in Chinese. The explanations given by both of them are considered correct as the answers given cohere with the definition of the word.

It is interesting to note that while the Malaysian pronunciation of the word 'relative' previously causes misunderstandings, it is recognizable by quite a number of Chinese listeners this time. Only five listeners could not grasp the word which is again, pronounced as /rɪleɪtɪf/ instead of /relətɪv/. The reason for this inconsistency is unexplainable and it is too early to derive a conclusion until more empirical research focusing on this aspect is done.

#### 4.2.2.2 *Question 2 Results and Analysis*

Table 4.36: Recording 2 Question 2 Results (Test of Comprehensibility and Interpretability)

| Question 2 / Participant | (i) [2m] | (ii) [5m] | (iii) [2m] | (iv) [2m] | (v) [2m] | (vi) [2m] | Total [15m] |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 1M,1E | 1M | 0 | 0 | 1M | 1M | 5 |
| 2 | 1M | 0 | 1E | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| 3 | 1M,1E | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| 4 | 1M | 1M,3E | 1M,1E | 0 | 2M | 0 | 7 |
| 5 | 1M | 1M,2E | 0 | 0 | 2M | 1M,1E | 8 |
| 6 | 1M | 1M,3E | 1E | 0 | 2M | 1M | 9 |
| 7 | 1M,1E | 1M,1E | 0 | 0 | 1M | 0 | 5 |
| 8 | 0 | 1M | 0 | 0 | 1M | 0 | 2 |
| 9 | 1M | 3E | 1E | 0 | 1M | 0 | 6 |
| 10 | 1M | 1M,4M | 0 | 0 | 2M | 1M | 9 |
| 11 | 1M | 1M,2E | 1E | 1M | 1M | 0 | 7 |
| 12 | 0 | 1M,3E | 1M | 0 | 1M | 0 | 6 |
| 13 | 1M | 1M | 1M | 1M | 2M | 0 | 6 |
| 14 | 1M | 1M,1E | 0 | 0 | 1M | 0 | 4 |
| 15 | 1M,1E | 1M | 1M | 0 | 2M | 0 | 6 |
| 16 | 1M | 1M | 1M | 1M | 1M | 1M | 6 |
| 17 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2E | 0 | 2 |
| 18 | 1M | 1M | 0 | 1M | 1M | 1M | 5 |
| 19 | 0 | 1M | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |

| | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 20 | 1M | 1M | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 |

* m: marks M: main point E: elaboration

In Table 4.36, we see a fairly low number of scorers for Question 2(iv) that depicts the Malaysian speaker's childhood game. As explained in section 4.2.2.1, the reason for this low amount is due to misperception of the phrase 'hide-and-seek' as a result of multiple vowel substitutions of the phrase and thus, making it to sound like "INC". A Chinese listener heard "I and see", further proving the similarity between the pronunciation of "hide-and-seek" and "INC".

What is noteworthy is the misinterpretation of the discourse corresponding to Question 2(v). When the Malaysian participant was asked by the researcher to give his opinion on whether Malaysians should speak like a native speaker of English, he opposed to the idea by explaining that Malaysians have our own way of speaking English and that Malaysians "don't like British". It was learned later that the speaker meant to say that Malaysians *are not like the British* in a way that Malaysians have their own speaking style. The incorrect use of modal verb "don't" nevertheless, leads to ambiguity of the utterance and consequently causes misinterpretation of the interlocutor's intention.

Similar with the findings of Recording 1, culturally-loaded lexical items are crucial contributors to incomprehensibility. Except for one Chinese listener, all of the other listeners are not able to identify the word "Lemang" which is depicted by the Malaysian speaker as the food he normally eats during Hari Raya. "Lemang", a type of food originated from the Malays, is not a shared culture to the students from China and thus, the term is reasonably unfamiliar and unheard of to them.

Apart from the ambiguity caused by incorrect use of modal verbs and unshared culturally-loaded words, the rest of the Malaysian English lexicogrammatical features

found in this recording extract do not seem to have any significant implications on comprehensibility, including a slight code-switch to the Malay language which is presumed to be detrimental to interpretability. Violations of subject-verb agreement and omission of articles do not impede interpretability just as exerted in Seidlhofer's lexicogrammatical 'sins'. The same applies to features that are not included in Seidlhofer's list such as inappropriate use of tenses, omission of plural '-s' as well as pro-drop.

### 4.2.3 Findings & Analysis of Recording 3

In this section, findings based on Recording 3 that are collected from the questionnaires answered by the Chinese international participants will be examined and analysed.

#### 4.2.3.1 *Question 1 Results and Analysis*

Table 4.37: Recording 3 Question 1 Results (Test of Intelligibility)

| Question 1 / Participant | (i) | | (ii) | | | | | (iii) | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | (a) | (b) | (a) | (b) | (c) | (d) | (e) | (a) | (b) |
| 1 | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ |
| 2 | √ | √ | √ | √ | | | | √ | √ |
| 3 | √ | √ | √ | √ | | | √ | √ | √ |
| 4 | √ | √ | √ | √ | | √ | | √ | √ |
| 5 | √ | √ | √ | √ | | √ | | √ | √ |
| 6 | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ |
| 7 | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | | | √ | √ |
| 8 | √ | √ | √ | √ | | √ | √ | √ | √ |
| 9 | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | | √ | √ |
| 10 | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ |
| 11 | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | | √ | √ | √ |
| 12 | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | | √ | √ | √ |
| 13 | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | | | √ | √ |
| 14 | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | | √ | √ | √ |
| 15 | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | | √ | √ |
| 16 | √ | √ | √ | √ | | √ | √ | √ | √ |
| 17 | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | | | √ | √ |
| 18 | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ |
| 19 | | √ | √ | √ | | √ | √ | | √ |
| 20 | | √ | √ | √ | | √ | √ | √ | √ |

| | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Total | 18 | 20 | 20 | 20 | 12 | 12 | 12 | 19 | 20 |

One of the first features in Jenkins' LFC (1998, 2000, 2002) states that substitutions of /θ/ and /ð/ are permissible because replacement of both of these dental fricatives is intelligible in an EIL context. It has also been proven in section 4.2.1.1 that this proviso as listed by Jenkins remains so far, accurate.

However, in this section, we see a little problem with the recognition of the utterance 'father' in Question (ii)(d). Baskaran (2005) claims that Malaysians tend to substitute the aforementioned dental fricatives with their corresponding alveolar stops /t/ and /d/ respectively. Just as described by Baskaran, the Malaysian pronunciation of the word 'father' in this recording is /fadə/ with the dental fricative /ð/ substituted with an alveolar stop /d/. Although more than half of the participants could identify the utterance, eight of them find it unrecognizable. Among the 12 participants who got the answer right, one of them are uncertain but replied with the answer 'dad' which is also marked as correct. The uncertainties of the participants in their answers and misinterpretation of the utterance nonetheless raise the question on whether it is possible for substitution of dental fricatives to be a potential threat to intelligibility by which it would have contradicted with Jenkins' LFC.

Another problematic utterance is the word 'sport'. In Malaysian English, this term is pronounced /spɒʔ/ with substitution of the final consonant sound to a glottal stop (/spɔ:t/→/spɒʔ/). There is also shortening of the long vowel /ɔ:/ to /ɒ/ but this could be due to the clipping effect induced by the stop substitution as theorized by Rajadurai (2006). Similar to the previous finding (refer to section 4.2.2.1), stop substitution is still an obstacle to intelligibility.

In the meantime, cluster reduction which Jenkins (1998, 2000, 2002) believes to be permissible, does not contribute to unintelligibility in this study as well. This is made evident by the total amount of 20 participants, all scoring in Question (i)(b). All of the Chinese participants manage to hear the utterance 'fast' despite it having the phoneme /t/ in the final cluster of consonants, reduced.

#### 4.2.3.2 *Question 2 Results and Analysis*

Table 4.38: Recording 3 Question 2 Results (Test of Comprehensibility and Interpretability)

| Question 2 / Participant | (i) [3m] | (ii) [1m] | (iii) [5m] | (iv) [2m] | (v) [2m] | (vi) [2m] | Total [15m] |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 1M | 0 | 1M | 1M | 2M | 0 | 5m |
| 2 | 1M,1E | 0 | 1M,1E | 1M | 2M | 0 | 7m |
| 3 | 1E | 0 | 1M | 0 | 1M | 0 | 3m |
| 4 | 1M,1E | 0 | 1M,1E | 1M | 2M | 1E | 8m |
| 5 | 1M,2E | 0 | 1M,4M | 0 | 2M | 1M,1E | 12m |
| 6 | 1M,1E | 1M | 1M | 1M | 2M | 1E | 8m |
| 7 | 1M,1E | 0 | 1M | 1M | 2M | 0 | 6m |
| 8 | 1M | 0 | 1M | 0 | 2M | 0 | 4m |
| 9 | 1M,1E | 1M | 1M,1E | 1M | 2M | 1M | 9m |
| 10 | 1M,2E | 0 | 1M,1E | 0 | 2M | 1M,1E | 9m |
| 11 | 1M,1E | 0 | 1M,1E | 1M | 2M | 0 | 7m |
| 12 | 1M,1E | 0 | 1M,1E | 0 | 1M | 0 | 5m |
| 13 | 1M | 1M | 1M | 0 | 2M | 0 | 5m |
| 14 | 1M,1E | 1M | 1M | 1M | 2M | 1E | 8m |
| 15 | 2E | 1M | 1M | 1M | 1M | 1M | 7m |
| 16 | 1E | 1M | 1M | 1M | 1M | 1M,1E | 7m |
| 17 | 1E | 0 | 1M | 1M | 2M | 1M,1E | 7m |
| 18 | 1M | 1M | 1M | 0 | 1M | 1M | 5m |
| 19 | 0 | 0 | 1M | 0 | 2M | 0 | 3m |
| 20 | 0 | 0 | 1M | 0 | 1M | 0 | 2m |

* m: marks M: main point E: elaboration

Results in Table 4.38 illustrate that comprehensibility was impeded mostly in the corresponding questions (ii), (iv) and (vi). The low number of scorers for Question (ii) could be due to the brevity of the utterance of Malaysian English extract in Recording 3. When asked to describe his favourite festival, the Malaysian speaker merely replied shortly

that he does not have any festival that could be considered as his favourite. With only this sole statement, it could have been easily missed by the Chinese listeners.

Meanwhile, the misleading feature that leads to incomprehensibility in Question (iv) lies mainly on the use of a culturally-loaded word "gasing". A few of those who are unfamiliar with this traditional game of the Malay ethnic group misperceive the word as 'guessing'. This is the third example after the results from Recording 1 and 2 attesting that speakers and listeners who do not adopt similar culture and language will have a higher chance of facing communication breakdowns especially in the recognition of ethnically-nativized lexical items. Contrastively, the use of semantically-similar words such as 'watch' and 'look' in Question (iii) does not affect interpretation as much as the use of unshared cultural lexical items does.

In Question (vi), the phonological variations of Malaysian English seem to be a problem as well. The vowel length in the word 'speak' that is not maintained and the typical insertion of a glide in words with a triphthong as in the word 'our' are both notorious features that hinder intelligibility. It is however noted that the greatest problem that causes misinterpretation of the utterances in Question (vi) lies on the final phrase "Like in, got that way lah". The utterance which is used as a general statement, serves the purpose almost equivalent that of fillers. It does not contribute substantial meaning to the discourse except to end the conversation by redirecting the focus to the preceding text when the speaker is stuck in his words. Since the word 'like' denotes examples, the listeners mistook the utterance as comprising relevant information. Yet, the use of discourse particle 'lah' added on to the complication and eventually leads to anomalous misinterpretations such as 'our style like Korea' or 'speak our style in Kondoria'.

Other variations in this extract of Malaysian English such as omission of copula 'be', inappropriate use of tenses, violation of subject-verb agreement, inappropriate use of plural '-s' and omission of articles do not seem to affect intelligibility.

### 4.2.4 Findings & Analysis of Recording 4

In this section, findings based on Recording 4 that are collected from the questionnaires answered by the Chinese international participants will be examined and analysed.

#### 4.2.4.1 *Question 1 Results and Analysis*

Table 4.39: Recording 4 Question 1 Results (Test of Intelligibility)

| Question 1 | (i) | | | (ii) | (iii) | (iv) | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | (a) | (b) | (c) | | | (a) | (b) |
| 1 | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ |
| 2 | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ |
| 3 | √ | | √ | | √ | √ | √ |
| 4 | √ | √ | √ | √ | | √ | √ |
| 5 | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ |
| 6 | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ |
| 7 | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ |
| 8 | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ |
| 9 | √ | | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ |
| 10 | √ | √ | √ | √ | | √ | √ |
| 11 | | √ | √ | √ | | √ | √ |
| 12 | √ | | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ |
| 13 | √ | √ | √ | √ | | √ | √ |
| 14 | √ | | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ |
| 15 | √ | √ | √ | √ | | √ | √ |
| 16 | √ | √ | √ | √ | | √ | √ |
| 17 | | √ | √ | √ | √ | | √ |
| 18 | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ |
| 19 | √ | | √ | √ | √ | | √ |
| 20 | √ | √ | √ | | √ | √ | √ |
| Total | 18 | 15 | 20 | 18 | 15 | 18 | 20 |

There is a recurrent variation in the Malaysian English speech from Recording 4. Previously, it is observed that two Malaysian speakers (Recording 1 and 2) pronounced the

word ‘relative’ as /rɪleɪtɪf/ instead of /relətɪv/. The data obtained thus far exhibit contradicting results whereby the first result (refer to section 4.2.1.1) shows this English variation as an obstacle to intelligibility whereas the second result (refer to section 4.2.2.1) illustrates otherwise. Results from this recording (i.e.Question (iii)), nevertheless, supports the latter. Only five Chinese participants find the word unintelligible despite it having the lowest number of scorers. The variations of feature are thus, unjustifiable to be deemed problematic.

At the same standing, there are also only five Chinese participants who could not recognize the word ‘example’ as tested in Question (iii). In Malaysian English, this word undergoes vowel substitution of /ɪ/ to /e/ (i.e. /ɪgza:mpl/→ /egza:mpəl/) and full realization of the final weakly-accented syllable (i.e. /egza:mpəl/) which change its overall pronunciation and thus, resulting in the word being misperceived as ‘exact’.

#### 4.2.4.2 *Question 2 Results and Analysis*

Table 4.40: Recording 4 Question 2 Results (Test of Comprehensibility and Interpretability)

| Question 2 / Participant | (i) [3m] | (ii) [9m] | (iii) [5m] | (iv) [3m] | (v) [4m] | (vi) [2m] | Total [26m] |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2M | 1M | 2M,1E | 1M | 1M | 1M,1E | 10m |
| 2 | 1M | 3E | 1M | 1M | 1M | 0 | 7m |
| 3 | 1M, 1E | 1M,1E | 1M | 1M | 0 | 0 | 6m |
| 4 | 1M,1E | 1M,6E | 2M,2E | 1M,2E | 2M,2E | 1M,1E | 22m |
| 5 | 1M | 1M,5E | 2M,2E | 1M | 2M,1E | 1M,1E | 17m |
| 6 | 1M | 5E | 1M,1E | 1M | 2M,1E | 1M | 13m |
| 7 | 1M | 3E | 2M,1E | 1M | 1M | 1M,1E | 11m |
| 8 | 0 | 0 | 1M | 1M | 1M | 0 | 3m |
| 9 | 1M,1E | 1M,4E | 2M,1E | 1M | 2M | 1M,1E | 15m |
| 10 | 2M,1E | 1M,4E | 1M,1E | 1M,1E | 2M,1E | 1M,1E | 17m |
| 11 | 2M | 3E | 1M,2E | 1M | 2M,1E | 2M | 14m |
| 12 | 1M | 3E | 2M | 1E | 0 | 0 | 7m |
| 13 | 1E | 1M | 2M | 1M | 1M | 0 | 6m |
| 14 | 1M | 1M,2E | 1M | 1M | 2M,1E | 1M,1E | 11m |

| | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 15 | 1M,1E | 2E | 1M,1E | 1M | 2M | 1M | 10m |
| 16 | 1M | 1M | 2M,1E | 1M | 0 | 1M | 7m |
| 17 | 1M | 2E | 1M,1E | 1M | 1M,1E | 1M,1E | 10m |
| 18 | 0 | 1M | 2M | 1M | 0 | 0 | 4m |
| 19 | 1M | 1M | 1M | 1M | 0 | 0 | 4m |
| 20 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1M | 0 | 0 | 1m |

* m: marks M: main point E: elaboration

Lexical items seem to be the biggest hindrance to intelligibility in the Malaysian speech of Recording 4. Words of cultural or national bases such as 'Deepavali','Muruku' and 'Twin-Towers' remain a constraint on intelligibility. Yet, it must be noted that mispronunciation of 'Twin-Towers' could be one of the reasons for misinterpretation of this landmark in Malaysia. In mentioning the building, the Malaysian speaker accidentally mispronounced the word 'Tower' (/taʊə(r)/) as 'towel' (/taʊwəl/), hence obstructing perception of the word. It is also undeniable that the ultimate reason behind the misunderstandings of both words is due to unfamiliarity of these culturally-bound lexical items.

Syntactically, most Malaysian English deviations did not lead to communication breakdowns as we see comprehensibility retained despite numerous variations found in the discourse including pro-drop, omission or inappropriate use of prepositions, improper use of plural '-s', omission of articles, inappropriate placement of adverbs, omission of possessive '-s', missing connectors, unparallel sentence structure or confusing use of tenses.

Nevertheless, it must be pointed out that the use of the phrase 'like that' as a general statement to finalize a sentence could be confusing to the Chinese listeners. This is clear in a few occasions where the Chinese participants could not figure out the last sentence that describes the benefits of the hobby adopted by the fourth Malaysian speaker (i.e. 'improve my imagination like that'). The Chinese listeners are able to grasp a general picture of that particular hobby aiding in the improvement of something but not the specific detail. It seems that the Chinese listeners mistook the phrase 'imagination like that' to be a noun

phrase denoting a single entity that is unheard of. Therefore, it is arguable to consider the general statement 'like that' to be redundant and misleading. Perhaps, the likelihood for the occurrence of misinterpretation could be considerably reduced without the use of such statements.

### 4.2.5 Findings & Analysis of Recording 5

In this section, findings based on Recording 5 that are collected from the questionnaires answered by the Chinese international participants will be examined and analysed.

#### 4.2.5.1 *Question 1 Results and Analysis*

Table 4.41: Recording 5 Question 1 Results (Test of Intelligibility)

| Question 1 / Participant | (i) | | | (ii) | (iv) | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | (a) | (b) | (c) | | (a) | (b) |
| 1 | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ |
| 2 | √ | √ | √ | √ | | √ |
| 3 | | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ |
| 4 | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ |
| 5 | √ | √ | √ | √ | | √ |
| 6 | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ |
| 7 | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ |
| 8 | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ |
| 9 | √ | √ | √ | √ | | √ |
| 10 | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ |
| 11 | √ | √ | √ | √ | | √ |
| 12 | √ | √ | √ | √ | | √ |
| 13 | √ | √ | √ | √ | | √ |
| 14 | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ |
| 15 | | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ |
| 16 | √ | √ | √ | √ | | √ |
| 17 | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ |
| 18 | √ | √ | √ | √ | | √ |
| 19 | √ | √ | √ | | | √ |
| 20 | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ |
| Total | 18 | 20 | 20 | 19 | 11 | 20 |

Table 4.41 shows a fairly well-achieved result with the only exception of Question (iv)(a). The corresponding phrase of Malaysian English to which the Chinese participants are required to identity in Question (iv)(a) (i.e. "other speak") turns out to be problematic. Both words in the phrase are unrecognizable to most of the Chinese listeners nor do these Chinese participants grasp the gist of the utterance. The latter is proven when one of the participants mistook the referent for the noun 'other' refers to native speakers of English when the correct referent actually refers to Malaysian non-native speakers of English.

Misinterpretation of the phrase could be due to both words being subjected to phonological changes such as dental fricative substitution of /ð/ with /d/ in the word 'other', as well as shortening of the vowel sound /i/ to /ɪ/ and substitution of the final consonant with a glottal stop /ʔ/ in the word 'speak'. Unexpectedly, dental fricative substitution which is claimed to be harmless to intelligibility in Jenkins' LFC (1998, 2000, 2002) and proven so in the examples above, contradictorily interrupts comprehensibility of the utterance. Misunderstanding caused by shortening of the vowel sound on the other hand, supports Jenkins' LFC to be true.

Besides that, features such as cluster reduction, reduced diphthong or diphthong substitution did not affect intelligibility of the Malaysian English speech of Recording 5. Vowel substitution which has previously led to unintelligibility of words such as 'relative' and 'calligraphy' also did not seem to have hindered comprehensibility of the utterances in this case.

#### 4.2.5.2 *Question 2 Results and Analysis*

Table 4.42: Recording 5 Question 2 Results (Test of Comprehensibility and Interpretability)

| Question 2 / Participant | (i) [3m] | (ii) [4m] | (iii) [4m] | (iv) [3m] | (v) [2m] | (vi) [3m] | Total [19m] |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 1M | 1M | 2M | 1M | 0 | 1M,2E | 8m |
| 2 | 0 | 1E | 1M,2E | 1M | 0 | 1E | 6m |
| 3 | 0 | 1M,1E | 1M,2E | 0 | 0 | 1M | 6m |
| 4 | 0 | 1M,2E | 2M,2E | 1M | 2M | 1M | 11m |
| 5 | 1M | 1M,2E | 2M,2E | 1M | 1M | 1M | 11m |
| 6 | 0 | 1M,3E | 1M,2E | 1M,1E | 2M | 1M,1E | 13m |
| 7 | 0 | 1M,2E | 1M,2E | 1M | 0 | 1E | 8m |
| 8 | 0 | 0 | 1M | 1M | 0 | 0 | 2m |
| 9 | 0 | 1M,1E | 2M,2E | 1M | 0 | 1M,1E | 9m |
| 10 | 0 | 1M, 2E | 2M,2E | 1M,1E | 1M | 1M,2E | 13m |
| 11 | 1M,1E | 1M,1E | 2M | 1M,1E | 0 | 1M,1E | 10m |
| 12 | 0 | 2E | 1M | 1M | 1M | 1E | 6m |
| 13 | 0 | 1M | 2M | 1M | 0 | 0 | 4m |
| 14 | 0 | 1M,2E | 0 | 1M | 0 | 1M | 5m |
| 15 | 0 | 1M,2E | 1M | 1M | 1M | 1M,2E | 9m |
| 16 | 0 | 1M | 2M,2E | 1M | 1M | 1M | 8m |
| 17 | 0 | 2E | 2M,1E | 1M | 0 | 0 | 6m |
| 18 | 1M | 1M | 2M | 1M | 0 | 1M | 6m |
| 19 | 0 | 1M | 1M | 1M | 0 | 0 | 3m |
| 20 | 0 | 1M | 1M | 1M | 0 | 0 | 3m |

* m: marks M: main point E: elaboration

One of the most salient finding in Table 4.42 is the below average number of scorers for Question 2(i) and (v). Only four Chinese participants could understand the fifth Malaysian participant as he describes the most memorable incident in his life whereas only seven Chinese participants comprehend his opinion regarding the unique qualities of Malaysia. The data reveal that words such as ‘integrity’ and ‘admittance’ are the main contributors to incomprehensibility of the utterances. Unlike culturally-loaded lexical items, the occurrences of these words are not restricted in the speech of Malaysian English. These words are commonly used with high frequency of occurrences in various varieties of English worldwide. The possible reason explanatory of the unintelligibility of these words could be due to rarity in the use of these lexical items in comparison to alternatives such as

'unity' and 'admission/entry/acceptance'. With lack of usage of these words, the likelihood for the Chinese participants to understand the utterances is considerably low.

In overall, the lexicogrammatical variations in Recording 5 including omission of articles, the use of discourse particle 'lah', inappropriate tenses, null-subject, omission of be-verb, the use of inappropriate collocation, word class, prepositions and subject-verb agreement did not lead to significant misinterpretation. Any communication breakdowns or misunderstandings found in the data of Recording 5 are more to the culpability of phonological variations than the lexicogrammatical ones.

### 4.2.6 Findings & Analysis of Recording 6

In this section, findings based on Recording 6 that were collected from the questionnaires answered by the Chinese international participants will be examined and analysed.

#### 4.2.6.1 *Question 1 Results and Analysis*

Table 4.43: Recording 6 Question 1 Results (Test of Intelligibility)

| Question 1 / Participant | (i) | | (ii) | | | | (iii) | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | (a) | (b) | (a) | (b) | (c) | (d) | (a) | (b) | (c) |
| 1 | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ |
| 2 | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ |
| 3 | | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ |
| 4 | | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ |
| 5 | √ | | √ | | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ |
| 6 | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ |
| 7 | | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ |
| 8 | | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ |
| 9 | √ | | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ |
| 10 | √ | | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ |
| 11 | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ |
| 12 | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ |
| 13 | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ |
| 14 | | | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ |
| 15 | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ |
| 16 | √ | | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ |

| | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 17 | √ | | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ |
| 18 | | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ |
| 19 | | | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ |
| 20 | | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | | √ | √ |
| Total | 12 | 13 | 20 | 19 | 20 | 20 | 19 | 20 | 20 |

Compared to the results of Recording 1 to 5, Table 4.43 exhibits a relatively better finding obtained from the questionnaire of Recording 6. The lowest number of scorers reported corresponds with Question 1(i) with an average of no less than half the total number of Chinese participants misinterpreting the aforementioned question.

Based on the answers given by the Chinese participants, it is apparent that the two phonological changes of the tested item 'gather' are responsible for the misinterpretation of Question 1(i). These phonological changes involved include dental fricative substitution of /ð/ to /d/ (/gæðə(r)/→ /gedər/) as well as vowel substitution of / æ / to / e / (/gæðə(r)/→ /gedər/). Their influence on intelligibility is made evident when most participants misheard the tested item as 'together' /təgeðər/ in which if the first syllable were to be taken out (i.e. /təgeðər/→/geðər/), it would have sounded similar to the Malaysian vocalization of 'gather' (i.e. /gedər/) with only one phonological element difference. Hence, it is unsurprising for the occurrence of such a misunderstanding.

As with previous cases of vowel substitution in Malaysian English, this feature is a constant threat to intelligibility except for high-frequency lexical items such as the word 'love', which is also proven to be intelligible to the Chinese participants in this section. In fact, the frequency of occurrence of the deviated pronunciation /lɜf/ is extremely high not just in Malaysian English but also in several other varieties of English. As such, familiarity of the word is high and thus, unlikely for intelligibility to be hindered.

Vowel substitution as a contributor to unintelligibility substantiates Jenkins' LFC (1998, 2000, 2002) whose core list include consistency of vowel qualities as one of the main provisos in retaining intelligibility. In addition to that, Malaysian English features found in this recording extract such as full vocalization of weak forms (e.g. 'vegetable' /vɛdʒtəbl/→/vɛdʒiteɪbəl/ and 'conversation' /kɒnvəseɪʃn/→/kɒnvəseɪʃən/) similarly, have no significant impact on intelligibility.

The feature that seemingly defies Jenkins' LFC (1998, 2000, 2002) in this case is the intelligibility of the tested words 'soup' and 'speaker' which have both had their vowel length reduced. In the standard form, both of the words 'soup' and 'speaker' each have a long vowel sound (i.e. /suːp/ and /spiːkər/) but they were shortened to /sʊp/ and /spɪkər/ in Malaysian English. Despite the changes, the Chinese listeners have no problems in recognizing the words. Jenkins' LFC advocates the importance of maintaining vowel length contrast between long and short vowel. Although the vowel length of 'soup' and 'speaker' is not maintained, this feature is permissible in this case as there are no other similar-sounding words that could have confused the participants like in the case of 'live' and 'leave'. The pronunciations of 'soup' and 'speaker', regardless of the vowel length will still unmistakably be perceived correctly.

#### 4.2.6.2 *Question 2 Results and Analysis*

Table 4.44: Recording 6 Question 2 Results (Test of Comprehensibility and Interpretability)

| Question 2 / Participant | (i) [4m] | (ii) [5m] | (iii) [4m] | (iv) [3m] | (v) [1m] | (vi) [3m] | Total [20m] |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 1M | 1M | 1M,1E | 1E | 1M | 1M | 7m |
| 2 | 1M,1E | 1M,2E | 1M,1E | 0 | 1M | 1M | 9m |
| 3 | 1M,2E | 1M,2E | 1M,3E | 1E | 0 | 1M | 12m |
| 4 | 1M,3E | 1M,4E | 1M,3E | 1M,2E | 1M | 1M,2E | 19m |

| | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 5 | 1M,1E | 1M,4E | 1M,1E | 1E | 1M | 1M | 12m |
| 6 | 1M | 1M,3E | 1M,1E | 0 | 1M | 1M | 9m |
| 7 | 1M,1E | 1M,4E | 1M,2E | 0 | 1M | 1M,2E | 14m |
| 8 | 1M | 1M | 1M | 0 | 1M | 0 | 4m |
| 9 | 1M,2E | 1M,4E | 1M,3E | 1E | 1M | 1M,2E | 17m |
| 10 | 1M,1E | 1M,2E | 1M,3E | 1M,1E | 1M | 1M,2E | 15m |
| 11 | 1M | 1M,2E | 1M,2E | 0 | 1M | 1M,2E | 11m |
| 12 | 1M,1E | 1M,3E | 1M,2E | 1E | 0 | 2E | 12m |
| 13 | 0 | 1M | 1M | 0 | 1M | 0 | 3m |
| 14 | 1M,1E | 1M,1E | 1M,2E | 0 | 1M | 2E | 10m |
| 15 | 1M,1E | 1M,4E | 1M,3E | 1E | 1M | 1M,2E | 16m |
| 16 | 1M | 1M,2E | 1M,2E | 1M | 1M | 1M,1E | 11m |
| 17 | 1M,1E | 1M,3E | 1M,2E | 1E | 0 | 1M | 11m |
| 18 | 1M | 1M | 1M | 0 | 1M | 1M | 5m |
| 19 | 1M,1E | 1M | 1M,1E | 0 | 0 | 0 | 5m |
| 20 | 1M,1E | 1M | 1M | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4m |

* m: marks M: main point E: elaboration

Similar to the results of section 4.2.6.1, the comparably good results as shown in Table 4.44 is an indication that comprehensibility of Recording 6 is mostly retained with the only exception of the part depicting the Malaysian participant's childhood game. More than half of the Chinese listeners could not get the word 'skipping rope' which is also known as a 'jump rope' in American English. There is no clear cut answer to justify the outcome but it is believed that the Chinese participants either do not know the word or they are more familiar with the American English equivalent 'jump rope'.

In terms of lexicogrammar, none of the features seem to have any significant effect on the comprehensibility of the whole discourse. It includes features that are without the risk of jeopardizing comprehensibility such as ellipsis of articles, omission of possessive "'s", inappropriate use of tenses, ellipsis of plural '-s', incongruous use of word class, omission/redundant/incorrect use of prepositions, violation of subject-verb agreement, pro-drop and odd comparative construction.

It is also noted that the speech is not susceptible to communication breakdowns even with the presence of lexical borrowings such as the name 'Tian Hou Gong' which is

understood by quite a number of the Chinese listeners as a type of Chinese temple. Obviously, there is a 'shared knowledge' concerning the culture and mother tongue between the speaker and listeners that aids in preserving intelligibility and comprehensibility. Again, this example validates Deterding's (2006) and Bent and Bradlow's (2003) theory about 'common features' help in facilitating intelligibility.

### 4.3 Conclusion

The above findings and analysis provide the answers to the two research questions as stated in Chapter One. In response to Research Question 1 (What are the linguistic features of a nativised Malaysian English that affect intelligibility for Chinese from Mainland China?) , data reveals that intelligibility of phonological and lexicogrammatical features of Malaysian English identified in this study accord with Jenkins' LFC (1998, 2000, 2002) and Seidlhofer's lexicogrammatical 'sins' (2001). Additional findings also show that there are new features discovered that could be added to both core lists (refer to section 5.1 for specific details) or to be further studied in the near future. In terms of Research Question 2 (What are the possible effects of English used by the local ethnics, i.e., Malaysian Chinese, Malaysian Malay or Malaysian Indian on the intelligibility for Chinese from Mainland China?), the analysis above reveals that ethnicity does not illustrate any significant effect on intelligibility except for the use of culturally-loaded words or code-switches. Nevertheless, local culturally-bound words that match the dominant language of the international Chinese students from Mainland China are intelligible, thus, validates Bent and Bradlow's (2003) theory on 'matched benefits' whereby on the other hand, contradicts Major et al. (2002) who refute the concept of 'matched benefits'.

# CHAPTER FIVE

# CONCLUSION

## 5.0 Conclusion

Given the findings as illustrated in Chapter Four, a number of conclusions could be derived pertaining the issue of intelligibility of Malaysian English. This chapter presents an overall review of the detailed analysis in Section 4.1 and 4.2, involving the main theoretical frameworks such as Jenkins' LFC (1998, 2000, 2002) and Seidhofer's lexicogrammatical 'sins' (2001).

## 5.1 Summary of Findings

### 5.1.1 Phonological Features

Based on Jenkins' LFC (1998, 2000, 2002), features of Malaysian English that support Jenkins' approach include:

- substitutions of /θ/ and /ð/
- shortening of vowel sounds before voiceless consonants and maintenance of length before voiced consonants
- omission of sound in final clusters

There are also other intelligible phonological features found in this study that are not included in Jenkins' LFC (1998, 2000, 2002). Some of these features may have relatively few occurrences in the study to be deemed as definite non-attributive to intelligibility yet there are nonetheless, features worth examining in future research:

- devoicing of voiced fricatives (final consonant)

- stop substitution with a glottal stop /ʔ/
- full realization of unstressed schwa/ unstressed schwa substitution
- glide insertion in triphthongs
- non-elision of weakly-accented syllable/ full realization of weakly-accented syllable
- lengthening of short vowels
- reduced diphthongs
- diphthong substitution
- syllable(s) reduction

On the other hand, phonological features found to be unintelligible include:

- vowel substitution
- secondary phoneme substitution

It must be noted that a word that undergoes major changes could have cumulative adverse effect, thus rendering it unintelligible even if the features are in the core list which guarantees intelligibility. In the case of high-frequency words such as the word 'love', participants have no difficulties understanding it despite it having gone through vowel substitution. This is due to the participants' familiarity of the deviated pronunciation /lɜf/ with its high frequency of usage among English users. Intelligibility is thus, unlikely to be reduced (Sewell, 2010; Brown, 1991a).

### 5.1.2 Lexical Features

Just as Jenkins' LFC (1998, 2000, 2002) conceptualizes around the notion of shared elements or a common prosodic core, Deterding (2006) and Bent and Bradlow (2003) also

advocate the concept of 'shared features' being attributive to intelligibility due to familiarity with each other's language. Date (2005), Kirkpatrick and Saunders (2005) as well as Major et al. (2002), however, argue that there is no significant matched benefit. Chinese listeners may not find the English of a Chinese speaker easier to understand.

Although the arguments asserted by these researchers are grounded on the phonological aspect, results from this study reveal that in terms of lexicology, shared language and culture are more of an intelligibility facilitator than a barrier. Most participants from China do not have any problems understanding words that are culturally related to them such as 'angpow' and 'Tian Hou Gong'. On the contrary, words that do not share any common culture such as 'Deepavali', 'Muruku', 'Gasing', 'Hari Raya', etcetera are incomprehensible to these international participants including some of those who have been in Malaysia for years. This result seems to accord with Jenkins' (2000, 2002), Deterding's (2006) as well Bent's and Bradlows' (2003) theory in that shared language and culture do portray matched benefit in intelligibility.

### 5.1.3 Lexicogrammatical Features

A comparison with Seidlhofer's lexicogrammatical approach (2001) exhibit a general consensus with the results of this study. None of the following two deviations as listed in Seidlhofer's lexicogrammatical 'sins' are detrimental to the loss of intelligibility:

- Using the same verb form for all present tense verbs/ violation of subject-verb agreement
- Omission of articles in front of nouns

Likewise, the following is a list of lexicogrammatical features that are non-attributive to intelligibility but are not included in Seidlhofer's (2001) lexicogrammatical 'sins':

- Inappropriate tenses
- Omission of plural 's'/ Inappropriate use of plural 's'
- Pro-drop
- Words which are semantically similar. E.g. 'watch' and 'look'
- Omission of copula 'be'
- Omission/ redundant/ inappropriate preposition
- Inappropriate placement of adverbs
- Omission of possessive 's'
- Missing connectors
- Unparallel sentence structure
- Mismatched multi-word verbs
- Incongruous word class
- Improper comparative construction
- Discourse particles. E.g. 'lah'

It is observed that most lexicogrammatical features found in this study do not cause incomprehensibility which turns out to fall in line with Seidlhofer's (2001) conception, as cited in Patil (2006), the most typical English features and 'traditionally serious errors' are non-essential for mutual understanding. The only lexicogrammatical feature which causes misunderstanding in this study it seems, is the use of general statement 'like that'.

Having critically examined intelligibility of Malaysian English features, this study has attested to the accuracy of Jenkins' LFC (1998, 2000, 2002) and Seidlhofer's (2001)

lexicogrammatical ‘sins’ (refer to chapter 4). In cases where provisos of LFC and lexicogrammatical ‘sins’ occurred in Malaysian English, results shown are by and large, consistently in line with both framework. This implies that intelligibility can be retained between non-native speakers of different varieties of English as long as certain provisos are met.

Culture wise, ethnicity does not have any significant effect on intelligibility except for the use of culturally loaded lexis or code-switch. Apparently, local culturally loaded lexis that matches the first language of the Chinese students is intelligible but lexis that does not match is found to be unfamiliar.

In a brief chat after the research, most participants acknowledged to being able to recognize the different ethnicity among the local speakers. The speech of these different races could be hard to understand but still roughly comprehensible depending on the accuracy of pronunciation, audibility of speech as well as the speed of articulation. Results in this study have also shown that ethnicity is not distinctively fatal to intelligibility as long as the speakers’ pronunciation met the requirements stated in Jenkins’ LFC (1998, 2000, 2002).

## 5.2 Limitations of the Study

It must be noted that this study has its limitations which might affect the results. One of most salient shortcomings of this research is the limited number of Malaysian participants. Due to the small number involved, variability of linguistic features found in their speech could be restrictive to which it could not cover all of the provisos in Jenkins’ LFC (1998, 2000, 2002) and Seidlhofer’s lexicogrammatical ‘sins’ (2001). Further research with a larger scale may produce a different result.

Generalizations of this project should thus, be taken with great care especially in regards to the effect of ethnicity which is still considerably lacking in information judging by the scarcity of previous works to add to the credibility of the results of this study. Nevertheless, this research could serve as a pioneer study for subsequent research to work on, with the focus put on the relationship between ethnicity and intelligibility.

Owing to attempts of covering a broader variability of linguistic features, there is also the possibility of the participating listeners losing concentration towards the end of answering the questionnaires due to the long duration of the research conducted. This may be quite tedious and exhausting to some of the participants. Despite that, the length of the research could not be reduced in order to keep the variability of Malaysian English features balanced. Listeners, on the other hand, are allowed to take their time in answering the questionnaires or a short break is granted when necessary with the condition of not leaving the research venue.

Other constraints include speaker and listener factors, some of which are pointed out by Lucy Pickering (2006), such as speakers' accentedness, audibility of speech, articulation speed as well listeners' familiarity in relation to the different linguistic variations, their attitude towards the target language and so on. These factors may affect intelligibility to a lesser or greater degree. Thus, these variables should be taken into account in future research for the validity and credibility of the results.

## 5.3 Implications of Study

The issues of intelligibility of Malaysian English should be contemplated beyond mere exploration of its nature as the implications of this intelligibility study are more far-reaching in terms of two aspects which are as highlighted in the preceding review: standardization and pedagogical concerns.

From the data presented in this study, it is clear that there is a "paradigm shift" towards intelligible and successful interaction with the use of non-native variety as opposed to the traditional reliance on the native variety of English as the sole frame of reference for international communication. For one, it is impractical for every speaker of English in the world to use only the native model. Secondly, if non-native varieties are as intelligible as native varieties, it does not make sense for the stigmatization of non-native norms. This study therefore, addresses the need for awareness and acceptance of non-native varieties of English in interaction as well as encouraging tolerance of Englishes other than our own.

Even though there is an undoubted need for tolerance of one another's English varieties, the question remains whether the status of these varieties, in this case, Malaysian English, should be promoted for standardization. It seems that at this point, the possibility for standardization is considerably low due to the absence of a fixed model with total public acceptance especially among educational practitioners. As far as it is concerned, acrolectal Malaysian English norms which have the highest potential of being accepted by educationalists as the standard model are still unclear and lacking in uniformity. It is undeterminable as to which of the features of Malaysian English (refer to section 4.1.1) could be accepted and included in the standard model.

By contrast, colloquial Malaysian English is relatively more favourable and readily acceptable among Malaysians than the acrolectal form. For instance, the use of discourse

particle ‘lah’ is of such popularity that it is identified as one of the most salient identity markers of nationality, recognizable even by foreigners. Intelligible as it may, it could have caused a disadvantage if used inappropriately in an international setting.

Hence, this is where pedagogical intervention is encouraged. Instead of teaching learners to abide strictly by the prescriptive native model of English, they should be taught the appropriate use of different norms in different settings. While this study acknowledges intelligibility of certain colloquial features, it must be noted that these colloquial norms should be used with caution.

Students need to be taught to switch lects to suit the different domains. As claimed by Rajandran (2011), not knowing to do so will only result in an uncomfortable situation for both speaker and listener while portraying a negative image of an incompetent user. With that in mind, this study therefore, advocates the importance of mastering the acrolect not only to ensure effective lect switching but also to keep a smooth flow of communication.

### 5.4 Recommendations for Future Research

As previously mentioned in Section 5.1, findings of this study reveal that ethnicity does not pose any significant adverse effect on intelligibility although most participants acknowledged to being able to recognize the different ethnicity among the local speakers. However, it is yet unknown in specific details the linguistic variables that enable foreigners to distinguish the English spoken by the different ethnic groups or which of these linguistic variables may be easier or harder to understand to non-Malaysians. While this study has offered a general observation on the English spoken by the different ethnic groups, results on intelligibility discovered in this study seems to be more on the lexical aspect. The

researcher finds this a potential field for research in the future especially in the sense that sub-varieties of English (i.e. Englishes spoken by the different ethnics) in Malaysia is still under-researched. Thus, it is strongly recommended that future research could attempt to:

- compare and list out the linguistic variables of the sub-varieties of Malaysian English in detail (e.g. linguistic similarities and differences of the English spoken by the different ethnic groups)
- provide a more thorough data as to which linguistic variables of the sub-varieties of English in Malaysia may facilitate or hinder comprehensibility. Results should encompass all linguistic aspects such as morphology, syntactic, semantic, pragmatic, etcetera
- investigate the attitude of Malaysians and non-Malaysians towards these sub-varieties of English in Malaysia in the perspective of intelligibility
- continue to provide data to enrich the current existing core lists (e.g. Lingua Franca Core, lexicogrammatical ‘sins’, etc.)

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**APPENDIX A**

# Questionnaire

This study attempts to explore the intelligibility of Malaysian English. I would appreciate your time in filling out this questionnaire. Thank you.

**Section A**

1. Name: _____

2. Contact Number: _____

3. Course: _____

4. Spoken language(s). (Please tick according to proficiency level):

| Language | Very poor | Poor | Average | Above Average | Excellent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | |
| | | | | | |
| | | | | | |
| | | | | | |
| | | | | | |
| | | | | | |
| | | | | | |

5. Dominant language (language used most in everyday conversation):

_____

6. Duration of stay in Malaysia up to now:

_____

7. TOEFL/ IELTS score: _____

**Section B**

**Recording 1:**

1. Listen carefully to the recording and fill in the blanks.

(i) “Erm.. Going _____ with my families. That, it’s about, and when I, when I’m in Form 3. And it’s a big family which ever by, by going by bus, and…it’s about 40, 40 person. All of us are _____, and we going to, we went to Langkawi.”

(ii) “My hobby is swimming…not everyday, just once a week. Because I _____.

(iii) “Most unique… _____different races, and have a _____ life.

(iv) “No, I _____. Because, as long as we can _____ to each other, that’s okay.

2. Listen carefully to the recording and give a summary for each section. Please include any elaborations/ explanations mentioned by the speaker.

| Theme | Explanation |
|---|---|
| (i) Most memorable incident(s) | |
| (ii) Favourite festival(s) | |
| (iii) Hobby | |
| (iv) Childhood game(s) | |
| (v) Unique of Malaysia | |
| (v) Opinion on whether Malaysian should speak English like a native speaker. | |

**Recording 2:**

1. Listen carefully to the recording and fill in the blanks.

(i) “Hari Raya. What I like about Hari Raya is because, uh, the day we can meet uh, _____, we can go to _____, and get some, and _____, huh, traditional food.”

(ii) “My favourite hobby. Uh, writing _____.”

(iii) “Childhood games. I like to play _____ with my siblings.”

(iv) “ We stay in different, different _____.”

2. Listen carefully to the recording and give a summary for each section. Please include any elaborations/ explanations mentioned by the speaker.

| Theme | Explanation |
|---|---|
| (i) Most memorable incident(s) | |
| (ii) Favourite festival(s) | |
| (iii) Hobby | |
| (iv) Childhood game(s) | |
| (v) Unique of Malaysia | |
| (v) Opinion on whether Malaysian should speak English like a native speaker. | |

**Recording 3:**

1. Listen carefully to the recording and fill in the blanks.

(i) “When I was uh, 9 years old, uh, there is, uh one uh, accident that occur uh, me, uh. When I uh, cycling uh, there is uh, one _____, was uh, he’s very, very _____.”

(ii) “My hobby is uh, actually is uh playing _____. Playing _____, I, uh, actually I, I uh, I _____ uh, when I was young. So, uh, my _____ also like _____ and then, he uh, uh bring me to stadium and look uh, match.”

(iii) “Mm…uh, in Malaysia they uh, have um, many uh, _____. So uh, for uh, many uh, _____. Indian, Chinese and Malay.”

2. Listen carefully to the recording and give a summary for each section. Please include any elaborations/ explanations mentioned by the speaker.

| Theme | Explanation |
|---|---|
| (i) Most memorable incident(s) | |
| (ii) Favourite festival(s) | |
| (iii) Hobby | |
| (iv) Childhood game(s) | |
| (v) Unique of Malaysia | |
| (v) Opinion on whether Malaysian should speak English like a native speaker. | |

**Recording 4:**

1. Listen carefully to the recording and fill in the blanks.

(i) “My favourite festival is Deepavali. Okay because is um, one of the festival we can uh, enjoy with our family, and can helping _____. It’s very enjoyable because a lot of _____ you can see on that day. And a lot, a lot of _____ we can taste also on that day.”

(ii) “Okay. My hobby is uh, singing and reading _____ but my…”

(iii) “Okay. My childhood game like uh, I play uh, most of the time I go for the playground, play see-saw game, and…I cannot give the _____ of the game actually.”

(iv) “Some of _____ are _____like that, but some of them are not because got some error language…”

2. Listen carefully to the recording and give a summary for each section. Please include any elaborations/ explanations mentioned by the speaker.

| Theme | Explanation |
|---|---|
| (i) Most memorable incident(s) | |
| (ii) Favourite festival(s) | |
| (iii) Hobby | |
| (iv) Childhood game(s) | |
| (v) Unique of Malaysia | |
| (v) Opinion on whether Malaysian should speak English like a native speaker. | |

**Recording 5:**

1. Listen carefully to the recording and fill in the blanks.

(i) “Uh, my favourite festival will be my personally I _____, uh, the one I celebrate most is Deepavali lah. Because, (mumbles) that is the only celebration we celebrate, uh, during the year, so I actually (mumbles)…Uh, on the normal cultural stuff, uh we do every year _____ go to temple praying and eating with _____.”

(ii) “Uh, my hobby, _____ of the time I surf the net and, uh, reading comics and books. Uh, normally the Japanese comics and English novels.”

(iii) “Uh, no, no. I think that’s not necessarily, uh, as far as I’m concern I think , it’s okay for one understand what’s uh, at the _____ English. We, _____ to, yes sound like an American or British.”

2. Listen carefully to the recording and give a summary for each section. Please include any elaborations/ explanations mentioned by the speaker.

| Theme | Explanation |
|---|---|
| (i) Most memorable incident(s) | |
| (ii) Favourite festival(s) | |
| (iii) Hobby | |
| (iv) Childhood game(s) | |
| (v) Unique of Malaysia | |
| (v) Opinion on whether Malaysian should speak English like a native speaker. | |

**Recording 6:**

1. Listen carefully to the recording and fill in the blanks.

(i) “Mm…Chinese New Year. Why is it my favourite…oh, okay. Because uh, all my relative, will come to my house and we _____, and, actually we uh, meet each other uh, once in a year. Mm, so, at Chinese New Year… In Chinese New Year, um, chit-chatting with them, with my cousin, and, we, going out… To _____.”

(ii) “My hobby. Cooking. Because I _____ cooking. Interested in cooking. Whoah! I like to _____ very much…Mm, fish, _____, and _____.”

(iii) “Mm. I think it is uh, depends on the _____, because uh like like , for me, I don’t have the context to, I mean I didn’t use English every day, in daily life uh _____. So I don’t have the context uh, to communicate in English. So my English won’t be uh, as flue-, fluent like a English native _____.”

2. Listen carefully to the recording and give a summary for each section. Please include any elaborations/ explanations mentioned by the speaker.

| Theme | Explanation |
|---|---|
| (i) Most memorable incident(s) | |
| (ii) Favourite festival(s) | |
| (iii) Hobby | |
| (iv) Childhood game(s) | |
| (v) Unique of Malaysia | |
| (v) Opinion on whether Malaysian should speak English like a native speaker. | |

**APPENDIX B**
**RECORDING TRANSCRIPTS**

**Transcript of Recording 1**

Erm.. Going travel /trevəl/ with /wɪf/ my families. That /det/, it's about /əbaʊʔ/, and when I, when I'm in Form 3 /triː/. And it's a big family which ever by, by going by bus, and…it's about 40, 40 person. All of us are relative /rɪleɪtɪf/, and we going to, we went to /tuː/ Langkawi.

Chinese New Year. Because I can get /geʔ/ many angpow. I visit to my relative and my friends.

My hobby is swimming…not /nɒʔ/ everyday, just /jɑːs/ once a week. Because I love /lɜf/ water /wɒtə/.

Playing congkak.

Most unique /məʊs‿juniʔ/ …3 /triː/ different races, and have /hef/ a peace, peace /pɪs/, peaceful life.

No, I don't /dɒn/ think /tɪŋ/ so. Because, as long as we can communicate /kɒmjuːnɪkeɪʔ/ to each other, that's okay.

**Transcript of Recording 2**

After I get my result, er, and being the /də/ best student in my school…Two years ago.

Hari Raya. What I like about /əbaʊʔ/ Hari Raya is because, uh, the day we can /ken/ meet uh, relative /rɪleɪtɪf/, we can go to their /dɪa/ house, and get /geʔ/ some, and eat /ɪʔ/, huh, traditional food. For example, Lemang, uh, Rendang….uh, my mother did, make those /dəʊs/ food.

My favourite hobby. Uh, writing Arabic calligraphy /kalɪgrafi/…because it show the beautiful /bju:tɪfu:l/ of the, the, the, what's call? Uh, the art.

Childhood games. I like to play hide-and-seek /haɪʔ en sɪk/ with /wɪt/ my siblings. Congkak and…batu serambut.

Malaysia is uh one country that have many races. Uh, we call, we can call the different, uh no no no no…unity and /ɪn/ diversity, uh, the unique country in the world I think.

No, I don't /dɒn/ think /tɪŋ/ so because uh, it need, uh what /wat/? We stay in different, different continental /kɒntɪnentəl/. And, uh..we have our phono…phono, phonetic verses. Not like, we don't, we don't, apa? Um…We don't like um, you, uh, British.

**Transcript of Recording 3**

When I was uh, 9 years old, uh, there /der/ is, uh one uh, accident that /det/ occur uh, me, uh. When I uh, cycling uh, there is uh, one motorbike /mɒtɒbaɪʔ/, was uh, he's very, very fast /fʌs/. And then /den/ uh, I don't /dɒn/ uh, look /lʊk/ uh, right /raiʔ/ and left /lef/, then uh, the motorbike uh, uh got /gɒʔ/, what is uh, collide /kɒləʔ/..uh, it's uh, in my village.

Uh, I…uh, festival, I…I don't…there is, no festival I like.

My hobby is uh, actually is uh playing football. Playing football /fʊtbɒ/ I uh, actually I, I uh, I like /laiʔ/ this sport /spɒʔ/ uh, when I was young. So, uh, my father /fadə/ also like football and then, he uh, uh bring me to stadium and look uh, match.

It is a, uh, traditional games like uh, um…traditional game lah. Not uh, not uh, modern game…Uh, gasing.

Mm…uh, in Malaysia they /de/ uh, have /hef/ um, many uh, kind /kaɪn/ of food /fʊd/. So uh, for uh, many uh, people /pɪppəl/. Indian, Chinese and Malay. So, fun. And this /dɪs/, and, there /de/ are many kind /kain/ of apa? Many (mumbles).

**Transcript of Recording 4**

Erm, memorable incident means, um, a good friendship when secondary schools. Mm, other than that, go uh outing uh, any interesting places with /wɪt/ my family. For examples like uh, um, is like /lai/, picnic at the /də/ beach, um temple /tempəl/ any occasionals, like that /laiʔ det/.

Okay. My favourite festival is Deepavali. Okay because is um, one of the /də/ festival we can uh, enjoy with /wɪt/ our family, and can helping mothers /mʌdəs/. It's very enjoyable because a lot of relative /rɪleɪtɪf/ you can see on that /dət/ day. And a lot, a lot of food /fʊd/ we can taste also on that day. Um, basically /beɪsɪkəli/ means um, at morning we pray. First of all, we pray first. After that /dət/ we, uh, give /gɪf/ some biscuits or some Muruku for the /də/ relative /rɪleɪtɪf/ and neighbours, After that we go for the friend house to celebrating the Deepavali, and night, we will play with /wɪt/ uh, fireworks.

Okay. My hobby is uh, singing and reading novels /nɒvels/ but my…mostly I'm reading Malays novels /nɒvels/… Because I can relax by reading the novel /nɒvel/, and can improve my imagination like that.

Okay. My childhood game like uh, I play uh, most of the time I go for the /də/ playground, play see-saw game, and…I cannot /kenɒt/ give the example /egzɑ:mpəl/ of the game actually /ektʃuəli/. I don't know /dɒnɔ:/ I forget already /reɪdi/ the name.

Um, unique /juniʔ/ about /əbaʊʔ/ Malaysia is multiracial. Yes. That /dət/ is uh, one of the unique for our country. Mm…and, some of the buildings, uh for example /egzɑ:mpəl/ T- Towers /taʊwəls/ (Twin Towers). It's all, pay a good image of the country.

Some of them /dem/ are speaking /spɪkɪŋ/ like that, but some of them are not because got some error language, for example we also got some grammatical error like that. But for… teach our American English not like that.

**Transcript of Recording 5**

Uh, most memorable incident I've seen, will be my admittance to the /də/ university…uh, Malaya in past year. Uh, I'm a first year student here so it was last year, if I'm not mistaken. Middle of last year…else to say, uh, perhaps my admittance to the /də/ uh, what is… residential school during Form 4, uh, two years ago.

Uh, my favourite festival will be my personally I think /tɪŋ/, uh, the one I celebrate most is Deepavali lah. Because, (mumbles) that /dət/ is the only celebration we celebrate, uh, during the year, so I actually (mumbles)…Uh, on the /də/ normal cultural stuff, uh we do every year like /laɪʔ/ go to temple praying and eating with /wɪt/ our family /feməli/.

Uh, my hobby, most /mɒs/ of the time I surf the /də/ net and, uh, reading comics and books. Uh, normally the Japanese comics and English novels.

My childhood uh, I've been, during childhood I've been playing football since small. Uh, it's been one of favourite games. Uh, I think /tɪŋ/ maybe uh, parental exposure since small. I have not exposed too much to other /ʌdər/ games.

Uh, I would say, in integrity of the races, the (mumbles) of different races and their /dɪa/ tolerance with /wɪt/ each other /ʌdər/.

Uh, no, no. I think /tɪŋ/ that's /dəts/ not /nɒ/ necessarily, uh, as far as I'm concern I think/tɪŋ/ , it's okay for one understand what's uh, at the other /ʌdər/ speak /spɪʔ/ English. We, don't /dɒn/ need /nɪd/ to, yes sound like an American or British.

**Transcript of Recording 6**

Mm…This /dɪs/ year Valentines, my boyfriend uh, gave /gef/ me the /də/ roses /rəʊsəs/ that /det/ he made by himself. Then /den/, uh, that's it /desˌɪʔ/. Mm, I feel so touched, touching. No, he bring me to a restaurant, and, and get me the /də/ present. I was so surprise /sʌpraɪs/.

Mm…Chinese New Year. Why is it my favourite…oh, okay. Because uh, all my relative, will /wɪ/ come to my house and we gather /gedər/, and, actually we uh, meet each other /ʌdər/uh, once in a year. Mm, so, at Chinese New Year… In Chinese New Year, um, chit-chatting with /wɪt/ them/dem/, with /wɪt/ my cousin, and, we, going out /aʊʔ/…To temple /tempəl/. Uh, Tian Hou Gong.

My hobby. Cooking. Because I love /lɜf/ cooking. Interested in cooking. Whoah! I like /laɪʔ/ to eat /ɪʔ/ very much…Mm, fish, vegetable /vedʒiteɪbəls/, and soup /sʊp/.

Childhood games. Skipping rope. Uh, playing skipping rope, with /wɪf/ my siblings. Because no others /ʌdərs/ game can /ken/ play.

Mm…multiracial culture.

Mm. I think /tɪŋ/ it is uh, depends /dɪpeɪns/ on the /də/ context /kɒnteks/, because uh like like /laɪʔ/ , for me, I don't /dʊn/ have /hef/ the context to, I mean I didn't /dɪdən/ use English every day, in daily life uh conversation /kɒnvəseɪʃən/. So I don't /dʊn/ have /hef/ the /də/ context uh, to communicate in English. So my English won't /wɒn/ be uh, as flue-, fluent /flu:ən/ like a English native speaker /spɪkə/.