

**THE INTELLIGIBILITY OF MALAYSIAN ENGLISH  
TO INTERNATIONAL CHINESE UNDERGRADUATES**

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## ABSTRACT

A recurrent debate invoked with the precipitate growth of English as an International Language (EIL), is seldom separable from the issue of intelligibility particularly on the subject of how readily intelligible are non-native English varieties in an international context. With more and more learners of English studying in Outer Circle and Expanding Circle countries, it is necessary to find out if there are any intelligibility problems that these non-native speakers of English could have faced while residing in the aforementioned countries such as in Malaysia and Singapore. This is also the case for students from China who are studying in Malaysia, a multiracial country where the English spoken is nativised by the diverse local languages. Hence, this research aims to investigate to what extent Malaysian English is intelligible to international students with considerations on the English spoken by the different ethnic groups in Malaysia. Using Jenkins' LFC (1998, 2000, 2002) and Seidlhofer's lexicogrammatical 'sins' (2001a, 2001b) as the primary frameworks, this research examines the features of Malaysian English discovered in the speech of six Malaysian students and its intelligibility to 20 students from China. The results shown are generally in accord with Jenkins' LFC and Seidlhofer's lexicogrammatical 'sins'. This is an indication that intelligibility of non-native Englishes could be retained in communications between non-native speakers of English. There are also additional findings that could be added to the core lists as an effort in expanding the existing databases. Finally, findings regarding the role of ethnicity endeavours to provide a better understanding on the possibilities of miscommunication caused by the English spoken by the different ethnic groups.

## ABSTRAK

Satu perdebatan berikutan perkembangan Bahasa Inggeris sebagai bahasa antarabangsa (English as an International Language/ EIL) jarang dapat diasingkan daripada isu “intelligibility” atau “tahap kebolehfahaman” terutamanya mengenai kebolehfahaman bahasa Inggeris yang diguna oleh penutur bukan asli (non-native speakers/ NNS) dalam konteks antarabangsa. Dalam situasi di mana semakin ramai pelajar bahasa Inggeris melanjutkan pelajaran di negara “Outer Circle” dan “Expanding Circle”, ia adalah amat penting untuk memahami masalah kefahaman yang mungkin dihadapi oleh pelajar ini. Begitu juga dengan situasi pelajar dari China yang menetap di Malaysia, satu Negara berbilang bangsa di mana Bahasa Inggeris diaslikan oleh pelbagai bahasa tempatan. Oleh itu, penyelidikan ini bertujuan untuk menyiasat sejauh mana Bahasa Inggeris Malaysia (Malaysian English) dapat difahami oleh pelajar antarabangsa dengan mempertimbangkan bahasa Inggeris yang dituturi oleh kumpulan etnik yang berlainan di Malaysia. Dengan menggunakan “Lingua Franca Core” atau LFC (Jenkins, 1998, 2000, 2002) dan “lexicogrammatical ‘sins’” (Seidlhofer, 2001) sebagai rangka teori utama, penyelidikan ini menyelidik fitur Bahasa Inggeris Malaysia yang ditemui dalam ucapan verbal enam orang pelajar Malaysia dan juga menyiasat kebolehfahamannya di kalangan 20 pelajar China. Dapatan yang diperoleh didapati adalah sejajar dengan LFC Jenkins dan “lexicogrammatical ‘sins’” Seidlhofer. Ini merupakan indikasi bahawa kebolehfahaman bahasa Inggeris bukan natif dapat dikekalkan dalam komunikasi dalam kalangan penutur bukan asli. Selain itu, terdapat juga tambahan penemuan baru kepada senarai utama sebagai satu usaha untuk menambahkan *database* yang sedia ada. Akhirnya, dapatan mengenai peranan etnik membekalkan pemahaman yang lebih baik ke atas kemungkinan masalah komunikasi yang disebabkan oleh penggunaan Bahasa Inggeris Malaysia.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<b>Page</b>
<b>ABSTRACT</b> .....	iii
<b>ABSTRAK</b> .....	iv
<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</b> .....	v
<b>TABLE OF CONTENTS</b> .....	vi
<b>LIST OF TABLES</b> .....	xi
<b>LIST OF FIGURES</b> .....	xiii
<b>LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS</b> .....	xiv
<b>CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION</b>	
1.0 Background of the Study.....	1
1.1 Problem Statement.....	4
1.2 Objective.....	6
1.3 Research Questions.....	6
1.4 Organisation of the Research.....	7
<b>CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW</b>	
2.0 Introduction.....	8
2.1 Intelligibility since 1950: An Overview.....	8
2.2 English around the World: The Emergence of New Englishes	
2.2.1 Models of English.....	14
2.2.2 Developmental Cycles of New English Varieties.....	22

2.3 Nativization/ Indigenization.....	24
2.3.1 Nativization of English in Malaysia.....	26
2.4 Issues and Implications	
2.4.1 Concerns for Standardization of a New Indigenous Variety.....	29
2.4.2 Pedagogical Concerns.....	32
2.4.3 Concerns for Intelligibility.....	34
2.5 Conclusion.....	43

### **CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

3.0 Introduction.....	44
3.1 Participants	
3.1.1 Interview Participants (Local Malaysian Students).....	44
3.1.2 Chinese Participants (International Students).....	46
3.2 Methods and Instruments	
3.2.1 Recordings.....	48
3.2.2 Questionnaire.....	50
3.3 Data Collection.....	51
3.4 Procedures of Data Analysis.....	54
3.5 Conclusion.....	55

### **CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS AND DATA ANALYSIS**

4.0 Introduction.....	56
4.1 Analysis 1: Features of Malaysian English.....	56

4.1.1 Pronunciation Features of Malaysian English	
4.1.1.1 Non-Elision in Weakly-Accented Syllable.....	57
4.1.1.2 Devoicing of Voiced Fricatives.....	57
4.1.1.3 Dental Fricative Substitution.....	58
4.1.1.4 Unstressed Schwa Substitution.....	59
4.1.1.5 Vowel Substitution.....	60
4.1.1.6 Stop Substitution.....	61
4.1.1.7 Phoneme(s) Reduction/ Cluster Reduction.....	62
4.1.1.8 Shortening of Long Vowels.....	63
4.1.1.9 Lengthening of Short Vowels.....	64
4.1.1.10 Reduced Diphthongs.....	64
4.1.1.11 Diphthong Substitution.....	64
4.1.1.12 Glide Insertion.....	65
4.1.1.13 Syllable(s) Reduction.....	65
4.1.1.14 Secondary Phoneme Substitution.....	66
4.1.2 Lexicogrammatical Features of Malaysian English	
4.1.2.1 Null Subject/Object.....	66
4.1.2.2 Tenses and Affixation.....	67
4.1.2.3 Subject-Verb Agreement.....	68
4.1.2.4 Plural ‘-s’.....	69
4.1.2.5 Multi-Word Verbs.....	70
4.1.2.6 Word Classes.....	70
4.1.2.7 Copula ‘be’.....	71
4.1.2.8 Articles.....	71



4.1.2.9 Confusing Words.....	72
4.1.2.10 Overuse of ‘like’ and ‘like that’ .....	73
4.1.2.11 Prepositions.....	74
4.1.2.12 Adverbial Positioning.....	75
4.1.2.13 Omission of Possessive ‘s.....	75
4.1.2.14 Parallelism.....	76
4.1.2.15 Connectors.....	76
4.1.2.16 Comparative Constructions.....	76
4.1.2.17 Discourse Particles.....	77
4.1.2.18 Code-Switching.....	78
4.2 Intelligibility and Comprehensibility of Malaysian English.....	79
4.2.1 Findings and Analysis of Recording 1.....	79
4.2.1.1 Question 1 Results and Analysis.....	79
4.2.1.2 Question 2 Results and Analysis.....	82
4.2.2 Findings and Analysis of Recording 2.....	83
4.2.2.1 Question 1 Results and Analysis.....	84
4.2.2.2 Question 2 Results and Analysis.....	86
4.2.3 Findings and Analysis of Recording 3.....	88
4.2.3.1 Question 1 Results and Analysis.....	88
4.2.3.2 Question 2 Results and Analysis.....	90
4.2.4 Findings and Analysis of Recording 4.....	92
4.2.4.1 Question 1 Results and Analysis.....	92
4.2.4.2 Question 2 Results and Analysis.....	93
4.2.5 Findings and Analysis of Recording 5.....	95

4.2.5.1 Question 1 Results and Analysis.....	95
4.2.5.2 Question 2 Results and Analysis.....	97
4.2.6 Findings and Analysis of Recording 6.....	98
4.2.6.1 Question 1 Results and Analysis.....	98
4.2.6.2 Question 2 Results and Analysis.....	100
4.3 Conclusion.....	102
 <b>CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION</b>	
5.0 Conclusion.....	103
5.1 Summary of Findings.....	103
5.1.1 Phonological Features.....	103
5.1.2 Lexical Features.....	104
5.1.3 Lexicogrammatical Features.....	105
5.2 Limitations of the Study.....	107
5.3 Implications of the Study.....	109
5.4 Recommendations for Future Research.....	110
 <b>REFERENCES.....</b>	 112
<b>APPENDICES.....</b>	<b>122</b>

## LIST OF TABLES

<b>TABLE</b>	<b>Page</b>
3.1 Malaysian Participants (Speaker).....	45
3.2 Chinese Participants (Listener).....	47
4.1 Examples of Non-Elision in Weakly-Accented Syllable.....	57
4.2 Examples of Devoicing of Voiced Fricatives.....	58
4.3 Examples of Dental Fricative Substitution.....	58
4.4 Examples of Unstressed Schwa Substitution.....	60
4.5 Examples of Vowel Substitution.....	60
4.6 Examples of Stop Substitution.....	61
4.7 Examples of Phoneme(s) Reduction/ Cluster Reduction.....	62
4.8 Examples of Shortening of Long Vowels.....	63
4.9 Example of Lengthening of Long Vowels.....	64
4.10 Examples of Reduced Diphthongs.....	64
4.11 Examples of Diphthong Substitution.....	65
4.12 Examples of Glide Insertion.....	65
4.13 Example of Syllable(s) Reduction.....	65
4.14 Example of Secondary Phoneme Substitution.....	66
4.15 Examples of Null Subject/ Object.....	66
4.16 Examples of Tenses and Affixation in Malaysian English.....	68
4.17 Examples of Subject-Verb Agreement in Malaysian English.....	69
4.18 Examples in the Use of Plural “-s” in Malaysian English.....	69
4.19 Examples of Multi-Word Verbs in Malaysian English.....	70
4.20 Examples of Word Classes in Malaysian English.....	71
4.21 Examples in the Use of Copula “be” in Malaysian English.....	71
4.22 Examples in the Use of Articles in Malaysian English.....	72

4.23	Examples of Confusing Words.....	73
4.24	Examples of Overuse of ‘like’ and ‘like that’.....	74
4.25	Examples in the Use of Prepositions in Malaysian English.....	74
4.26	Examples of Adverbial Positioning in Malaysian English.....	75
4.27	Examples of Omission of Possessive ‘s.....	75
4.28	Examples of Parallelism in Malaysian English.....	76
4.29	Examples in the Use of Connectors in Malaysian English.....	76
4.30	Examples of Comparative Constructions in Malaysian English.....	77
4.31	Examples of Discourse Particles in Malaysian English.....	77
4.32	Examples of Code-Switching.....	78
4.33	Recording 1 Question 1 Results (Test of Intelligibility).....	79
4.34	Recording 1 Question 2 Results (Test of Comprehensibility and Interpretability)	82
4.35	Recording 2 Question 1 Results (Test of Intelligibility).....	84
4.36	Recording 2 Question 2 Results (Test of Comprehensibility and Interpretability)	86
4.37	Recording 3 Question 1 Results (Test of Intelligibility).....	88
4.38	Recording 3 Question 2 Results (Test of Comprehensibility and Interpretability)	90
4.39	Recording 4 Question 1 Results (Test of Intelligibility).....	92
4.40	Recording 4 Question 2 Results (Test of Comprehensibility and Interpretability)	93
4.41	Recording 5 Question 1 Results (Test of Intelligibility).....	95
4.42	Recording 5 Question 2 Results (Test of Comprehensibility and Interpretability)	97
4.43	Recording 6 Question 1 Results (Test of Intelligibility).....	98
4.44	Recording 6 Question 2 Results (Test of Comprehensibility and Interpretability)	100

## LIST OF FIGURES

<b>FIGURE</b>	<b>Page</b>
2.1 Kachru's Three Concentric Circles.....	17
3.2 Methodological Framework of Research (Perimeter of the study).....	53

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

1. EIL : English as an International Language
2. LFC : Lingua Franca Core
3. NNS : Non-Native Speakers
4. ME : Malaysian English
5. CC : Chinese Chinese
6. MC : Malaysian Chinese
7. MM : Malaysian Malay
8. MI : Malaysian Indian
9. ENL : English as a Native Language
10. ESL : English as a Second Language
11. EFL : English as a Foreign Language
12. ELF : English as a Lingua Franca
13. VOICE : Vienna-Oxford International Corpus of English
14. TOEFL : Test of English as a Foreign Language
15. IELTS : International English Language Testing System