

# CHAPTER 1

## BACKGROUND

### 1.0 Introduction

Within the linguistic scenery in Malaysia, many young people grow up in a multilingual setting and they are able to use more than one language and use a mixture of languages in their spoken discourse (Garcia, 2007). In Malaysia, many studies have been conducted on the switching of one language to another language, but there is a lack of research on the use of different varieties of the same language, such as English. . Similarly, there is also a lack of studies on the language use among Malaysian female teenagers and how this language usage affects their identity in terms of group acceptance. The studies on identity conducted in Malaysia show a clear relationship between language and identity among Malaysians in general, but not many of these studies include teenagers as a component of the researches. Even though there is a lack of studies on teenagers, the findings of the other studies can be used as reliable reference points as these were conducted on the Malaysian context. This qualitative research aims to explore and understand language use among a group of Malaysian female teenagers at home and at school and how this relates to group identity and acceptance.

### 1.1. English in Malaysia

As Malaysia was once ruled by the British, the use of English occupied several formal and informal domains; it was once the official language in administration and was used in courts and education. According to the Malaysian Education portal (<https://www.malaysia.gov.my>) many of the earliest English medium schools in Malaysia were founded in the Straits Settlements of Penang and Malacca The spread of

English resulted in an elite group of local users among the Malays, Chinese and Indians. As English was mostly used by the rulers, people with knowledge of English were given privileges. This helped increase the number of English speakers, leading to an increase in the number of English medium schools in Malaysia. This increase of English medium schools was linked to the influential nature of English as it was used in so many settings that it remained the official language in certain states in Malaysia such as Sabah and Sarawak, even after ten years of obtaining independence in 1957 (Ain Nadzimah and Chan, 2003). However, although after independence the number of English medium schools decreased in number, some schools continued to use English till the late 1960s. In the 1970s, all English-medium primary and secondary national-type schools were transformed into Malay-medium national schools in accordance with the national language policy. The gradual change was completed by the end of 1982. The status of English decreased to such an extent that it became a subject of study like other subjects.

By the mid-1990s, tremendous changes were seen in the education sector. The government of Malaysia felt that it was necessary to give new emphasis on the learning of English, which was and is still seen as crucial in the advancement of trade and commerce as well as giving the country a competitive edge. A milestone change took place when the government approved the teaching of scientific and technical subjects in English at the tertiary level. In addition, the then Prime Minister, Tun Dr. Mahathir Mohammad, initiated the teaching of Mathematics and Science in English in 2002 in schools. However, this policy has now been scrapped and both these subjects are now taught in Malay in national schools. Lee (2010: 88), asserts that,

English, in Malaysia has a rather complex and ironic status as it is an inherited language, a legacy of the British colonialists, an inevitable consequence of its role in our national history.

She also adds that, among Malaysians, English is viewed differently. Some see English as the most important second language, which is neutral and can be used for social integration and for formal uses while the others see it as a threat to the Malay language and local cultures. However, English is still being taught as a subject in schools from Year 1 (primary) to Form 5 (secondary) and is widely used in business, medicine, education, science and technology and in daily communication among some groups of Malaysians. The colloquial variety of Malaysian English, popularly known as ‘Manglish’, tends to be used in informal inter and intra-ethnic communication. Being at least bilingual, most Malaysians are able to switch between languages depending on contexts and situations. According to Mukherjee and David (2010), many Malaysians switch effortlessly between three or more languages, not necessarily because they need to but because they are able to as they are quite familiar with more than one language. In relation to English, it has been shown that Malaysian speakers who are fluent in English also switch to the more colloquial form of Malaysian English in particular contexts, such as when communicating among friends and family members (Pillai, 2010).

## 1.2 Malaysian English

According to Platt and Weber (1980), until 1965, a common variety of spoken English which was called, Singapore-Malayan English, existed as both Malaysia and Singapore were under British rule. When Singapore became independent in 1965, the development of Singapore-Malayan English reached an impasse because of the differences found in national policies regarding the status and functions of English as Singapore wanted to give importance to it and wanted to make English as one of the office language in schools and Malaysia was more in favour of Malay.

The type of English used in Malaysia has gone through many changes since the time it was introduced in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. According to Gaudart (1997), there are many varieties of English used in Malaysia and these varieties range from the more colloquial to the standard form of English. These varieties are spoken in many different local accents, and used in different social and professional contexts. Although the term Malaysian English is sometimes taken to refer to the colloquial variety which is rather derogatively called “Manglish”, according to Baskaran (1994), it is used here as an umbrella term to include all varieties of English used in Malaysia. The author also divides Malaysian English into three categories: acrolect, mesolect and basilect. The acrolectal variety is near-native English which is used by those who are educated in core English speaking-countries from school to universities. Acrolectal English is also used in newspapers and in the news on television. She also adds that locally educated people use the mesolectal variety of English while the others use basilectal variety which is the colloquial variety. On the same note, Talif and Ting (1994) assert that the acrolectal variety is mostly used in formal settings such as schools and at international platforms, while the mesolectal variety is less formal in nature and used in informal discourses.

According to Talif and Ting (1994) the acrolectal variety which is used in formal settings is not standardized as the standardization of Malaysian English is not possible and at the same time it is not necessary. The authors assert that there is no Standard Malaysian English as there is no documented description of what constitutes Standard Malaysian English, Malaysian. The variety used in formal contexts by Malaysians such as mainstream newspapers, news, in the classroom during English lessons, conference presentations, at official business meetings, in legal proceedings can be considered as the Standard form of Malaysian English with characteristic lexical and pronunciation features.

However, there is no official consensus about what Standard Malaysian English is. According to Finegan (2007), a standard language is a language variety which is widely used by a group of people in their daily lives public discourse. A particular variety becomes a standard language by undergoing a process of standardization. He also added that during this process the language should be codified and a recognized dictionary with standardized spelling and vocabulary must be developed and deployed. At the same time this language should have a recognized standard grammar and pronunciation. Apart from that, this particular language should also have a legal status and frequently used as an official language. All these criteria do not describe Standard Malaysian English, and perhaps it is because of this, this variety is still yet to be standardized or considered as a standard variety.

### 1.3 Language use in Malaysia

According to Bloomer (2005), there are a number of factors which can affect the language choice. These factors include the characteristics of the language users, which are known as user factors and the situation in which language is used. According to David (2006), more than a hundred languages and dialects are spoken by Malaysians daily. Most Malaysians are exposed to a minimum of two languages which are Malay and English apart from their mother tongues. Many Malaysians are also exposed to other languages such as Tamil and Cantonese or Mandarin in school from their peers and media. Most Malaysians are likely to be at least bilingual and many are multilingual. For example, a Malaysian of Tamil origin may speak Tamil, English and Malay. Because of this, code-switching and code-mixing are a common phenomenon among them Gill (2001). In general, there is no consensus on the difference between code-switching and code-mixing, with some authors treating them as the same phenomenon while others view code-switching as having occurred when there is an

alternate use of another language above the clause level (Cárdenas-Claros & Isharyanti 2009), while alternate use of language below the clause level is considered as code-mixing.

According to Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (1999), language use can also reveal many aspects of one's identity involving a sense of acceptance and belonging into a group or it can exclude a person from a social group altogether. For example, a study by Vaish and Roslan (2011: 327), of the language use of a group of Singaporean teenager girls from different ethnic backgrounds found that although Standard English is "an in-group language because it is the medium of instruction for all school children in Singapore, [it] is not considered to be an in-group language in the ideology of the girls". Instead, Singlish is the in-group language as it "is the language of solidarity and friendship" (ibid).

#### 1.4 The present study

In daily communication, it can be observed that female teenagers in Malaysia are able to switch from one variety of English to another and there is a lack of studies on why they do so and how the use of these varieties affects their identity involving group acceptance. A more systematic research is much needed to highlight the language use of teenagers at particular situations and the identity that surfaces with the language use. According to Martínez (2011) previous studies on the language usage among teenagers were more focused on the phonological and lexico-semantic levels of analysis and grammar. Less was researched on the varieties of language used among teenagers in different situations or domains and the identity that they portray when they use a certain variety of English.

## 1.5 Objectives of the study

This research aims to discover the usage of different varieties of English by a group of female teenagers and why they do so. Through personal observations of these teenagers, it appears that teenagers who use the mesolectal variety while speaking among family members and friends, were able to write formal letters or prepare a debate script using the acrolectal variety without any problem. These observations led to the question of why they use the colloquial or the mesolectal variety to communicate when they can also use the more acrolectal variety of English. To address this question, this study seeks to explore the language choices of young Malaysians when they interact with family, members at home, with neighbors and with peers and teachers at school. It also seeks to discover if language is related to the individual's identity because it has been noticed that some teenagers speak differently when they are among different groups of people. This is based on the assumptions that language choice can provide both social and linguistic information (Holmes, 2001). It is anticipated that the findings of this present study will help explain the motivation behind the use of different varieties of English among the selected teenagers.

## 1.6 Research questions

The research questions that this study seeks to address are:

1. To what extent do Malaysian female teenagers use different varieties of English at home and at school?
2. When do Malaysian female teenagers switch from the colloquial variety to a more acrolectal variety of Malaysian English?
3. How is their use of English related to their sense of group identity?

### 1.7 The significance of the study

This study is important as it will provide insights into the varieties of English used by the Malaysian female teenagers in certain communicative settings. This study can help teachers and educators of English to understand their students' ability in the use of language. At the same time, teachers who teach teenagers who use the mesolectal variety would be able to guide them to use the formal acrolectal variety in teaching and learning activities and also in examinations. Apart from that, teachers also would be able to understand their students' identity crisis when it comes to group acceptance. As for students, this study will stress the importance right variety of English to be used in the appropriate context or communicative situations

### 1.8 Conclusion

In this chapter, the background of English in Malaysia and its usage were discussed along with the three main types of English varieties used in Malaysia. The sense of identity involving group acceptance was also mentioned. The next chapter presents a review of related literature.



## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 2.1 Introduction

In Malaysia, research on language use focuses mostly on the various ethnic groups and on undergraduates. For the purpose of this research, the literature review will focus on the type of Englishes used in Malaysia by teenage females and identity which refers to group acceptance.

#### 2.2 Sociolects in Malaysia

According to Pillai and Fauziah Kamaruddin (2006), there is a continuum sociolects or varieties of English used in Malaysia, as mentioned in Chapter 1 and as proposed by Baskaran (1994): acrolect, mesolect and basilect varieties of English. Stewart (1965:15) proposed that “the acrolectal variety is placed at the upper boundary of a continuum while the basilectal variety is at the lower boundary while the mesolectal variety is the intermediate point”. Pillai (2006: 62) adds that “placing Malaysian English in a continuum implies that there is no neat division within and between the three sub-varieties”. This means that all the three varieties of English mentioned do not appear in discrete units, but there is a continuity among them, which enables Malaysians to switch from one variety to another when the need arises as indicated in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1: The characteristics of sociolects in Malaysia

	Acrolect	Mesolect	Basilect
Nature	Native-like variety	Localised variety	Colloquial Variety
Examples	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Formal use</li> <li>*Newspaper reports</li> <li>*Formal letters</li> <li>*In education</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Informal use for communicative and written purposes between kinship</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Very informally used by those who are less proficient in English</li> </ul>

### 2.3 Language used by teenagers

In written language, according to Jones and Myhill (2007: 460), women tend to “use a higher level of language and give more importance to specific linguistic characteristics such as usage of adverbials, repetition of the same words, such as nouns, and the use of synonyms and hyponyms”. Although the authors did not state the writing context, it shows that in general, "women, use the acrolectal variety, which does not differ much in morph-syntactic variation from Standard English when it comes to writing" (ibid). The statement above on the spoken and written language clearly supports the present study because it shows that there is a difference between both the discourses among females.

### 2.4 Multilingualism

Multiethnic communities in Malaysia which are mainly Malays, Chinese and Indians create a linguistic diversity while the daily interactions among these groups help to develop it into a unique society. According to Tarone (1983), multilinguals have more cultural exposure and this inevitably affects their utterances. In addition, with more than one language in their linguistic repertoire, multilinguals also have the option to mix languages within their utterances and such a practice has been noted as a normal communicative option. It shows that most Malaysians are exposed to a minimum of two or even three languages at the same time and this creates a multilingual situation. Rajadurai (2010: 291), adds that the “linguistic diversity of Malaysia is also due to its education system in which English is given the importance of a second language status despite not having an official status”. In other words, although English in Malaysia is not the national language, it is given due importance in schools where it is a compulsory subject in the Malaysian school system.

## 2.5 Language use in specific domains

According to Platt and Weber (1980), Malaysian students are non-native speakers of English, and these students are exposed only to the English they have learnt in Malaysia. They also add that these students use the language learnt in the Malaysian context and has, as in many second language environments, developed its own characteristics. The description on the language use by students can be related to the present research as the respondents in this research are all Malaysian students and they were born and bred here and they are also non-native English speakers.

Understanding language use in society means that one also has to comprehend the social networks in which language is used or deployed for communication purposes. According to Wardhaugh (2006: 33), a “social network is another way of describing a particular speech community in terms of relations between individual members in a community”. He also adds that a network could be loose or tight depending on how members interact with each other. As an example, an office or factory may be considered a tight community because all members interact with each other. A gathering of over a hundred students would be a looser community because students may only interact with the instructor and maybe with one or more other students. A multiplex community is one in which members have multiple relationships with each other. For instance, in some neighbourhoods, members may live on the same street, work for the same employer and even intermarry. Wardhaugh’s (2006) work also shows that the type of language used is closely related to the situation that they are in. Pillai (2006: 73), through her study on the variety of English used in the family domain, concluded that based on the grammatical structured used, “although the adults and children have the acrolectal variety as part of their language repertoire, the type of English used in the home domain was more mesolectal”. She also added that, in the work domain the respondents used the more acrolectal variety of Malaysian English. This shows that

although the children and adults are proficient in English and are able to use the acrolectal variety of English, when it comes to home situations, they are able to shift to the mesolectal variety. When compared to the present research, we can conclude that the usage of teenagers' language is also connected to the situation or domain which they are in.

## 2.6 Identity

McNamara (1997:410) uses the term identity to “refer to how people understand their relationship to the world, how that relationship is constructed across time and space, and how people understand their possibilities for the future”. He also asserts that a person's identity will shift in accordance with changing social and economic relations. What it means is that, one's identity changes through time according to the situation the person is in. On the same note, Goffman (1959:12) has been successful in showing that “the self is constructed entirely through discourse, making our language choices of paramount importance to our identity construction”. In fact, he states “that personal identity is defined by how others identify us, not how we identify ourselves” (ibid). He also adds that a speaker can attempt to influence how others perceive them, but ultimately it is the hearer who creates the speaker's identity. If the speaker is not allowed any influence on their own output, then the hearer is able to construct an identity for the speaker which may be entirely disparate from the speaker's desired identity. At the same time the speaker and the hearer who takes turns in the discourse create a discreet identity among themselves which later becomes a group identity.

On the other hand, if a speaker is not able to blend into the identity of a certain group, the concept of “othering” surfaces. According to Palfreyman (2005:230), “othering” refers to the “practice of comparing ourselves to others and distancing ourselves from them and also plays the roles of markers of differentiation that shape the

meaning of “us” and “them”.” This can be related to group acceptance, which will be highlighted in this present study. This shows that identity is not a fixed entity and it can be changed over time and according to the situations in which the individuals are.

## 2.7 Relationship between language and identity

In Malaysia, studies conducted on language and identity have been conducted by Asmah (1998), states that Malaysian sociolinguists are more interested in language and identity and their researches are more confined to studies on national identity. This is because of the gradual implementation of the national language policy in Malaysia since its Independence in 1957. She also adds that identity, on the lower level, for example the community or group, has not really been given much attention to by the researchers. Her research also showed that linguistic identity in individuals is not inborn and not fixed, but changes with the individual’s development, environment and situations of language use. This statement shows that language is capable to change one's identity through time and this identity is not fixed forever. Another study conducted on identity issues by David (1996) on the Sindhis, a minority group shows that there was a language shift from the first generation of Sindhis to the third generation, where English replaced the Sindhi language. She also adds that this language shift has changed their language and identity, although the cultural identity still remains. Her research shows that English has the power to change a communities’ language use and language identity.

Lee (2006) also conducted several similar studies on the impact of English on the identities of a group of postgraduate students at a prominent university in Kuala Lumpur. Through her observation among these postgraduate students who were very fluent speakers of English, she found that some Malay students conversed in English among themselves. These studies also showed that Malay postgraduates who used

English were labelled differently and they were given a different identity according to the language that they spoke. These particular postgraduates were referred as show offs and being boastful and at the same time labelled as a relic of colonialism and in some cases, they are accused of betraying the Malay culture, identity and its language. This resentment was also seen amongst the Chinese postgraduates. These Chinese postgraduates said they were identified as too westernized by peers who do not use English widely for communications. This is because the respondents in the study could only speak in English and Mandarin was not used, although Mandarin was their mother tongues and its usage has decreased in use at home and also in their social interactions outside the house and in learning institutions. It can be concluded that English is used as a yardstick to determine one's self or group identity.

As for the present study, the same situations that came upon the postgraduates can be related to the teenagers as some of their peers avoid them as these selected teenagers are more apt in using English in their social discourses in schools. The studies conducted in Malaysia show a clear relationship between language and identity among Malaysians in general and they can be used as reliable references as these researches were done locally by local researchers.

On the international front, Fasold (1984) asserts that as well as to communicate content, language is used to make a statement about one's own identity. On the other hand, West (1992) through his research identifies identity as a concept linked to desire: the desire for recognition, affiliation, security, safety, and material acquisition, other researchers say that there is a greater relationship and bond between identity and language. In education, the use of language to construct identity has been researched and explored by Adger, (1998), Bucholtz, (1999), Fordham, (1998) and Toohey, (2000). Gracie (2001) and Zavala (2000) have also contributed to this study after carrying out research specifically among bilingual Spanish-English speaking students and research

was also carried out as a whole in a bilingual Spanish-English society by Johnson (2000). The findings of the studies showed that the identity of the Spanish students changed as they felt that they had a different identity when speaking Spanish with their family members and a different identity when they used English with their peers in school.

Another scholar, Bourdieu (1977), states that the level of relations between groups, a language is worth what those who speak it are worth, so too, at the level of intentions between individuals, speech always holds a major part of its value to the value of the person who utters it. This explains that language or languages, either spoken or written, are very valuable and it adds value to the speaker and this clearly shows that language determines one's identity.

While Bourdieu (1977), says that language and identity are interrelated, Norton (2008), says that during communication, one's identity goes through some changes. In Norton's article, he puts forward a notion which says that every time language learners speak, they are not only exchanging information with their interlocutors, but at the same time they are also constantly organizing and reorganizing a sense of who they are and how they relate to the social world. Thus, what goes on between them is identity construction and negotiation. Beside him, after carrying out an in depth research among ethnic group in North America, Edwards (2009:96) asserts that "a language or dialect, though it may be lacking in general social prestige, may nevertheless function as a powerful bonding agent, providing a sense of identity". He also added that "any variety can be the voice of group identity, a central element in the revitalized 'consciousness' of nonstandard-dialect speakers". This clearly shows that even a language or a dialect which is not given an important status can change one's identity. This can be related to Malaysia as English which is as a second language is able to change one's identity. It

can be concluded that English, may it be the Standard or the colloquial variety, too, will be a prominent factor in moulding the teenagers' identity in this present study.

In another study, Mead (1934) says that identity construction is not a conscious process, but rather it is influenced by unconscious psychological processes. He also adds that it is an on-going, evolving and dynamic process which is pluralistic in nature. He also viewed the self as a social emergent, arising through processes of social experience and interaction. In a nutshell, he concludes that identity is developed in the given individual as a result of his experiences with social interaction and the people involved in these interactions. From this we can say that identity evolves in a person and there is a process that goes on in every individual that shapes his or her own identity and this identity change from time to time. Norton (1995) also supports Mead when it comes to the relationship between language and identity. He says that neither identity nor language is a fixed notion as both are dynamic depending upon time and place. He also asserts that the way we perceive ourselves changes with our community of practice, allowing us multiple identities over the years or even within a day. According to Norton (1995), a person may have multiple identities in a same day depending on the group to which he or she is attached. At the local front, where Malaysian are exposed to multiple languages such as Malay, English, Cantonese, Mandarin and Tamil to say a few, multiple identities seemed to be fostered through ownership of multiple languages, allowing respondents to switch and "mask" according to the languages that they are using Lee (2008). She also adds that their identities dependent on the situation that they are in and in changing contexts. This scenario is further magnified when it comes to the usage of English and it can be clearly seen that English is clearly a language that divides the people of Malaysia when it comes to language usage. Lee (2008) also adds that English is seen as an important marker of identity in the multilingual and multiethnic Malaysian society. When it comes to one's one mother tongue, Asmah (1992) asserts



that Chinese and Tamil parents who are highly educated in English, and use it mainly in their lives revert to their own mother tongues when it comes to their children. They go through great lengths to make sure that their children use their mother tongue by sending them to tuitions and even vernacular schools. This, she asserts, is done to uphold their identity as loyal mother tongue users. This shows that identity is given great importance and on the other hand, the use of language determines one's identity.

In another of her study involving ethnic groups such as Malays, Chinese and Indians, Asmah (1998) concludes that linguistic identity of an individual is not inborn and not fixed but changes with the individual's development, environment and situation of language users. The notion that has been put forward by Asmah (1998) and Lee (2008) are also supported by Lim and Ansaldo (2007) who assert that language learners are seen as selves and as persons that have to exist in various contexts and situations, and they need to constantly negotiate and transform their selves. Thus, they have to construct, co-construct and re-construct their identities to cope and deal with their own world and the realities of the world around them. This also proves that identity is not a stagnant entity, but a very dynamic one that changes according to the situations the individual is in or attached to. This discussion is also supported by the works of Tajfel (1970), who is regarded as the greatest contributor to psychology, emerged the well renowned social identity theory. Social identity is a person's sense of who they are based on their membership that they are attached to. Tajfel (1970) proposed that the groups can be of a social class, a family or even a football team. In short, identity can be formed according to the group that a person is in. These particular groups give their members a sense of social identity or more precisely a sense of belonging to the social world. He also asserts that this is what social identification is all about. It occurs when we adopt the identity of the group to which we belong .

On the other hand, Thornborrow (2004) says that individuals also can choose or determine their identity as they wish according to their language use. They can do so by placing themselves within or outside these social groups and communities using language as a marker of membership, partial membership or non-membership. He adds that this takes place because the linguistic choices an individual makes others judge them and by doing so shapes the individual's identity. This shows that when an individual joins a group which has a group identity, the individual too embraces the group identity and this is a very common scenario in schools. Students are usually grouped as the 'elite group', 'moderate group' and the 'weak group'. Without realising it, the teacher who divides the students into such groups is giving each of the group their own group identity. Later, when a new student is put into the weak group, the new student will embrace the group's identity. In support of Thornborrow's (2004) theory, in their current research on language, Bucholtz and Hall (2005) propose that culture and identity is concerned with the ways in which individuals use language to co-construct their everyday worlds and, in particular, their own social roles and identities and those of others.

All the studies discussed in the previous section provide valuable information on the relationship between language and identity, which is more on group acceptance. It can also be concluded that group acceptance can emerge even though the Standard English or any variety of English is used in daily discourses. The studies also show that it is possible for a person to have different identities according to the language that they use and the communicative situations that they are in and these identities are not static and they are created according to one's experiences through language use.

In a similar study, Kroskrity (2000: 114) explains that:

when people take different roles in communicative contexts with specific individuals or groups at various discourses, it is known as interactional identities while the kind of relationship that a person enacts during these conversations is known as relational identities. Both these types of identities can surface when the conversation is with a particular conversational partner in a specific situation.

He also asserts that these two types of identities are dynamic and are negotiated from moment to moment and are highly variable. This can be clearly seen in the identities in the respondents in this research. It can be clearly seen that these respondents undergo changes in their identities in various domains and with different levels of language users.

McKay and Wong (1996: 583) assert that in the “education front, teachers and educators must recognize the language learners as complex social being with multiple identities and those educators must be well aware of this situation.” They also assert that the identities if the learners go through constant struggle and changes when they are switching from one identity to the other. As a conclusion, as Thronborrow (2004) put it, identity, whether on an individual, social, or institutional level, is something that we are constantly building and negotiating throughout our lives through our interaction with others.

## 2.8 Conclusion

The past studies on language use have been an important area of sociolinguistic research as speakers are judged by their choice of language use. Although there is a prominent difference between the spoken and written language among women, in general, the choice of the variety of English used also supports this notion. It is also

argued that the domain where a language is deployed also plays an important factor on the type of language used. At present, research in Malaysia has mainly focused on the language used by women and postgraduates in general and not among female teenagers in Malaysia.

From studies put forward, we can conclude that social identity of an individual is neither a fixed personality trait nor it is inborn. It has a lot to do with the language that an individual uses to communicate in a group. The individual's identity is shaped by taking into consideration the individual's membership in the group, if the individual is immersed in the norms of the group, then we can say that the individual identity is on par with the group's identity and if the individual is a non-member of the certain group, then we can say that the individual's identity is very different from the group's identity. The literature review in this chapter also sheds light on the dynamic role of one's identity which is seen here as an ever changing entity not only over time but which can change in a day. Hence, it can be said that each and every individual has multi identity when language is concerned.

Thus far, most of the researches involving language usage concern Malaysians as a whole or as individual ethnic groups, but there is a lack of research on the varieties of English that teenagers female Malaysian use. It is hoped that this present paper will shed some light into this matter.

## CHAPTER 3

### METHODS

#### 3.0 Introduction

In order to address the three research questions, five respondents were selected for the study and the sections below describe the procedures taken to conduct the present study. For the purpose of this study, a few accepted terms will be used throughout the paper and they are presented in Table 3.1. This is done because some of the terms used, such as identity and code-mixing have a wide usage in the area of sociolinguistic researches and related areas.

Table 3.1: Terms used

Terms Used	Definition
Acrolectal variety	Standard written and spoken English used in formal situations, such as newspapers and national television news (Baskaran1994)
Mesolectal variety	Colloquial Malaysian English which is mainly used for informal spoken and written communication such as communication between friend and family members, text messages, FB posts
Communicative situation	The place where a particular communicative discourse takes place.
Identity	Group acceptance
Code mix or code-mixing	This term will be used to refer both code-mixing and code-switching as not to confuse the flow of the present study and the respondents.
Domain	The setting or place a communication takes place. For the purpose of this research the domains involves homes and school.

(Baskaran, 1994; Pillai & Fauziah Kamaruddin 2006)

#### 3.1 Respondents

The respondents in this study were chosen through convenience sampling, where respondents were who met a set of criteria, which is shown in Table 3.2. According to Creswell (2008), in convenience sampling, the researcher selects respondents who are willing and available as respondents. It was felt that these five respondents were able to represent the community of school going girls in their age group.

Table 3.2 Criteria for the selection of respondents

Born and educated in Malaysia
Living in the same area
Students aged between 16 – 17
Fluent in English
Multilingual

The respondents were handpicked because they are proficient in spoken English. Through personal interactions, with the respondents and their parents, it was observed that they are also able to code-mix frequently. The respondents also live in the same neighbourhood, which facilitated data collection. All these respondents live in the same area, which is Seremban 2, is situated seven kilometres from Seremban, Negeri Sembilan, south of Kuala Lumpur. To maintain anonymity, the names of the respondents were replaced with codes as this was deemed important to protect their personal identity. The codes used to represent the respondents' race, gender and age. An example, if the code is R1IF17, it represents the particulars of a first participant who is an Indian female aged seventeen. As the average age of the respondents is 16.5 years, consent from their parents was obtained and this is discussed in the following section.

### 3.2 Ethical issues and letter of consent

After selecting the respondents base on the criteria mentioned in the previous section, and before starting the research, an informal meeting was held between the researcher, the respondents and their parents. The parents were briefed about the nature of the research and also the purpose of the research. They were assured that the identity of their children would not be revealed. It was also stressed that the information gathered from the questionnaire, interviews and also the test results would be anonymised . The respondents were also told that no monetary appreciation would be

given and that there was also no risk involved. The parents of these five respondents signed the letter of consent willingly. The example of the letter is attached in the appendix (APP 3).

From Table 3.3 , it can be seen that all the respondents are teenage females from different ethnic groups who each has a different languages as her mother tongue and English is the second most language used by them. However, not all of them speak their mother tongue fluently essentially making English their most dominant language. Most of the respondents are able to speak three languages and one of them speaks four languages (see Table 3.3).

Table 3.3: Basic information of the respondents

No	Name	Age	Race+	Gender	1 <sup>st</sup> Language	2 <sup>nd</sup> Language	3 <sup>rd</sup> Language	4 <sup>th</sup> Language
1	R1IF17	17	I	F	Tamil	English	Malay	None
2	R2MF17	17	M	F	Malay	English	Cantonese	None
3	R3IF16	16	I	F	Sinhalese	English	Malay	None
4	R4CF16	16	C	F	Mandarin	English	Malay	None
5	R5IF16	16	I	F	Tamil	English	Malay	Cantonese

Table 3.4 shows the respondents' parents' occupations. Based on their occupations, which was obtained through social communications with the respondents, all their parents have at least a secondary school education as shown in Table 3.4. The respondents' fathers and mothers are all working and these girls spend most of their time with their grandparents when their parents are at work. It was also noted through social communications with the respondents that when they are with their grandparents, they usually use their mother tongue or their first language, although the use of this language is minimum and they usually to code-mixing.

Table 3.4: Parents' occupations.

No	Name	Father's Occupation	Mother's Occupation
1	R1IF17	Teacher	Teacher
2	R2MF17	Bank manager	Bank Officer
3	R3IF16	Businessman	Accountant
4	R4CF16	Engineer	Clerk
5	R5IF16	Businessman	Clerk

All of the respondents attended private kindergartens situated around Seremban 2 from the age of four to six. Three of them attended English medium kindergartens while the rest went to a Chinese one where English was also taught. When these girls started their primary education, R1IF17 and R2MF17 were the pioneers of the *Pengajaran dan Pembelajaran Sains dan Matematik Dalam Bahasa Inggeris*, hereforth PPSMI, a system in which Science and Mathematics were taught in English while the other three respondents followed suit the following year. When the Education Ministry of Malaysia reverted to their PPSMI policy to conduct Science and Mathematics in Malay, the principals of the schools that the respondents attended continued with the PPSMI policy as the schools were given a choice in doing so. Thus, these two schools still teach these subjects in English and the students are encouraged to answer in English when it comes to exercises, homework and also in the examinations for Science and Mathematics.

Table 3.5 shows the respondents' results for English in their Lower School Assessment or *Penilaian Sekolah Rendah (PMR)* and their 2012 mid-term Examination results. This was done to compare their achievements in both of the examinations. These results were obtained from them with their parents' permission. All of them scored an "A" for English in both the public examinations and "A+" for their school



examination, and these, along with personal observation can be taken to be an indicator of their proficiency in English. However, although they obtained “A”, this grade only reflects their writing skills. Their speaking skills were not tested in the previously mentioned examinations, but this skill was determined through the interviews carried out. The background of the test will be discussed later in this chapter.

Table 3.5: Respondents’ English grades

No	Name	The grade obtained for English in PMR	The grade obtained for English in the Midterm Test (2012)
1	R1IF17	A	A+
2	R2MF17	A	A+
3	R3IF16	A	A+
4	R4CF16	A	A+
5	R5IF16	A	A+

### 3.3 Instruments

In order to get information to answer the three research questions, various instruments were deployed to obtain data from the respondents. The respondents’ PMR and their midterm examination results were obtained to ascertain the proficiency level of the respondents. To examine if they could use the acrolectal variety of English, a written test was administered. This written test was also used to prove that they are also proficient in the language. While the following sub-sections describe the various instruments used, Table 3.6 gives a brief description of the instruments used in this study and their relevance to the research questions.

Table 3.6: Instruments and rationale

	Instrument	Purposes	Reference to Reseach Question
1	Questionnaire	To obtain personal background information, language used in different situations and the variety of English used in these situations.	RQ 1
2	Written Test	To obtain information on the variety of English they use when writing in a formal setting such as in school exams.	RQ 2 RQ 3
3	Reflective Journals	To provide an insight on the variety of English that the respondents use in different situations and as well as how they feel when they are interacting while using different varieties with different people.	
5	Interviews	To obtain information on the varieties of English used at home and school, and an insight on the language in particular situations.	

### 3.3.1 Questionnaire

In this research, two types of questionnaires were used (see Appendix APP 1 and APP 2). Items 1-6 of Part A of the first questionnaire (APP1) were used to acquire personal background information of the respondents, while items 7-12 were aimed at obtaining information on the language background of the respondents. The rest of the items, 13- 15, were related to their hobbies and the reading habits of the respondents, as these may reveal the type of language that they lean towards. On the whole, Part A of the questionnaire was aimed at eliciting the background details of the respondents and the language used at home, the preferred languages of the respondents and also the other languages that they use daily. Part B of APP 1 was designed to elicit information on the educational background of the respondents. This part aimed to find out the type of pre-school education that they obtained and the languages used in different situations. The

aspect of pre-school education was deemed important to make sure that all the respondents had received early childhood education which gave them early exposure to their second or third languages.

This part also sought to find out whether they were taught Mathematics and Science in English in their secondary school even after PPSMI was discontinued in 2012. It was felt that this part involving PPSMI was important because both Science and Mathematics were taught in English and this would help the respondents to enrich their vocabulary and the overall command of English.

The second questionnaire, which is Appendix APP2, was given after the respondents were briefed about the terms “Standard English” and “code-mixing”. This was done to help them understand the terms which would help them when they were completing their reflective journals. Short roleplays were also carried out by the researchers and the respondents during the briefing session to give them a better understanding of the terms Standard English and code mixing. Examples are as follow:

Standard English: The food was so tasty that I ate two plates of rice.

Code mixing: The food was so *sedap* [delicious] that I *hantam* [ate] two plates of *nasi*. [rice]

These questionnaires helped to find out how often and how much they use English in schools and at home. On the whole, these questionnaires provided insights into the language use of the respondents and also the type of English that they used while communicating with different people in different situations (APP 2).

### 3.3.2 Interviews

According to Kvale (1996:1), “interviews are conversations at the most basic level”. He also defines qualitative research interviews as "attempts to understand the world from the subjects' point of view, to unfold the meaning of peoples' experiences, to

uncover their lived world prior to scientific explanations”. This shows that through interviews, we are able to obtain valuable information from the respondents; view and their experiences. Semi-structured and undisguised interviews were used to gather more in depth information (APP 3). This interview was undisguised as the respondents were previously briefed about the purpose of the research and what was expected from them. During the interview, structured questions (APP7) were prepared and during the interviews, other questions were also added to get additional feedback from the respondents. The questions (APP 3, Part B) were aimed at obtaining feedback about their feelings, assumptions and what they think about themselves during different situations that they are in while talking to their teachers or peers or family members. This feedback from part B would provide a better insight on group acceptance based on the language used in different situations with different people. In many parts (APP7, Part C), they were asked to explain why they use a particular variety of English with certain groups and a different variety with another group. The interview was recorded verbatim and the respondents were asked to repeat when necessary to make sure that the response written down was correct.

Other invaluable information that was gathered during these interviews were although these respondents are so used to speak in the colloquial variety, during the beginning of the interview they were all very formal and they were using the acrolectal form of spoken English as though they were attending a job interview. Midway through the interview, they began to relax and they began to answer in the colloquial variety and began to code mix.

### 3.3.3 Writing test

The test comprised a creative writing task where the respondents had to write a short story titled “A Mother’s Sacrifice”. Each of the students' essays was marked by

two English teachers who are teaching English to Form 5 students in different schools in Seremban to avoid biases and to get a fair mark for each piece of work. The respondents' work was marked based on the rubrics shown in APP 8. The individual marks from each of the teachers were added and an average was obtained to determine the final mark. This written test carried a maximum of 100 marks. The teachers who marked the papers did not know the respondents personally. A copy of the question is attached in the appendix (APP 3). The main aim of the test was to examine if the participants can use the acrolectal variety of English to prove that they can use different varieties of English according to context

#### 3.3.4 Reflective journal

Strong, Silver and Perini (2001), support the use of reflective journals as they believe that they allow students to think back what they have learnt and how this changes their life and the people around them. Zemelman, Daniels, and Hyde (1993) believe that the most powerful learning happens when students monitor themselves, or reflect. As learners continue to distinguish what they know from what they need to re-evaluate or relearn, they begin to translate discoveries they have made about their own learning into plans for improvement. Just as reflective journals open the windows of a student's mind, they also allow teachers additional insight into how students value their own learning and progress. On the same note, Wellington (2000: 118), asserts that reflective journals are a kind of "annotated chronological record or a 'log' of experiences and events". He also asserts that "the data collected from the reflective journals are generated by the respondents themselves"(ibid), which might be difficult to obtain through other instruments. Wellington (2000) also adds that on the researcher's part, he or she is not confined to any formulas or rules and what can be obtained from the reflective journal is the core insight of the respondents' thought and feeling. At the

same time, Marefat (2002: 105), proposes that researchers are interested in journals because they are “records of opinions and perceptions important for the learner – ideas which cannot easily be tapped in other ways”. Goodson and Sikes (2001: 32) support the use of reflective journals in researches. According to them,

Not only is a document of this kind useful for providing factual information, It can also help with analysis and interpretation, in that it can jog the memory and indicate patterns and trends which might have been lost if confined to the mind. (ibid?)

For this research, the respondents were asked to record the nature of their conversations in the reflective journal. The journal was a platform for them to put their reflect on the nature of their language use with their teachers, peers, parents, siblings and relatives. Specifically, it provided information on the type of English that they have used with different people and at different situations. The reflective journal was the best way to obtain information because what was obtained from the journals would not be possible through other instruments. To help the respondents with their reflective journal, a format in a table form was drawn up. This table would make their work easier and it would also help them to be more focused.

It was also agreed that the following terms presented in Table 3.7 could be used in the journal.

Table 3.7: Terms used in Reflective Journal

Accepted terms used in journals by respondents	Definition
Correct English	Standard English
Broken English	English with many grammatical and structural errors
Code mixing	Colloquial English with a mixture of other languages

The sample of reflective journal that was used for this research is as follows  
(see APP 8):

Table 3.8: Sample of reflective journal

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Day: \_\_\_\_\_

Talked to	Place	Nature of Conversation	Types of English used	Reasons why I used the specific type of English

They were given only one week to complete the reflective journal and this was carried out during the second last week of school, where they were quite free after their year-end examinations. Although they seemed a bit unsure at the beginning, after the first day and a short meeting with them, they knew what to do. Relevant extracts from the journals are provided in chapter 5.

### 3.4 Data analysis

The information derived from the questionnaire and the interviews were coded according to the research questions thematically, which were mentioned in the research questions. For example, all data pertaining to the use of varieties of English was grouped together to determine the emergence of similar patterns and conclusions were made pertaining to the patterns. By comparing the data obtained from the interviews and questionnaires and with the data from the written test, it could be determined if the respondents are able to switch from one variety to another variety of English according to the domain they are in. This was done by comparing the language used while communicating with family members and peers and with the language they use in

formal situations such as in schools and examinations. On the other hand, the reflective journal presented the connection between the varieties of language used and how they are accepted in groups, which portrays their group identity. This was done by analyzing the varieties of English they used in certain situations and the sense of acceptance they felt while communicating in a certain group.

### 3.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, the methods used in this study were described. The following chapter presents the findings based on the analysis of the data.



## CHAPTER 4

### FINDINGS

#### 4.0 Introduction

The data obtained through the various instruments mentioned in the previous chapter will be presented through sub-topics in the following sections. The findings will give a clear picture of the respondents' background and also the varieties of English used in different domains and how identity which involved group acceptance form by using different varieties of English with different groups of English users.

#### 4.1 Background of respondents

As the questionnaires were divided into two parts, the respondents' responses were analyzed according to these parts. The first part was about their background and the second was regarding their choice of language used. Here , the data collected from each of the respondents were compared with the other respondents to see the similarities and the pattern that emerges in each of the three parts. Before discussing the data collected, the personal details, language use and language choice according to the different domains such as the home and school are explained.

##### 4.1.1 R1IF17

R1IF17, who is seventeen this year, is in Form 5. She is the only daughter and her parents are English teachers. She only speaks English with her parents and Tamil to her grandparents who went to Tamil-medium schools. The grandparents live with the respondents' family . As her grandparents were educated up to Standard or Primary 3, they are not very fluent in English, although they are able to use a few words. R1IF17 is the assistant head prefect in her school and she is constantly engaged in conversations

with her teachers who speak English most of the time. As she puts it, she likes to converse in English as she is comfortable with it and she also mixes more than one language in her conversations, usually Tamil and Malay. From my observation, she is able to speak very fluent Malay. According to her mother, gained by informal social interaction, when she was growing up, they were in Gemencheh, a small town near Gemas, 85 km from Seremban , and their neighbours were mostly Malays, hence her fluency in Malay. When it comes to reading, she says that she loves teenage romance and horror story books like “Twilight” and self-motivational books like “Secrets” by Rhonda Bryrne. Her reading habit show that this respondent is exposed to a different genre of writing and the books that she reads are based on the acrolectal variety of English.

#### 4.1.2 R2MF17

R2MF17 who is also seventeen comes from a family of five and she has two other siblings and she is the eldest. Her parents are working in Kuala Lumpur, xx km away and they travel to and from Seremban every day. At home, she speaks English to her mother and Malay to her father. According to her, she prefers to speak in English as she knows that by doing this, she can improve her English and this would help her to excel in this subject in school. After school, R2MF17 spends most of her time with her grandmother who is of Chinese origin and is Chinese-educated (went to a Chinese-medium school). According to her mother, R2MF17 usually speaks to her grandmother in Cantonese although her grandmother was educated in Mandarin. Lately, R2MF17 admits that she is beginning to become less fluent on Cantonese as she does not use it as often as she used to. She also adds that decreased contact with other Chinese neighbours have also influenced the use of the language. Although she is into Korean dramas, she says that she still prefers to watch English movies and enjoy watching

teenage sitcoms when she is free. She also added that through these sitcoms, she is able to learn new words, expressions and also pronunciations.

#### 4.1.3 R3IF16

R3IF16, who is sixteen years old, comes from a Sinhalese family where her grandparents are from Sri Lanka. According to her parents, R3IF16's grandparents came to Malaysia when they were young and they are now in their late sixties. Although R3IF16's heritage language is Sinhalese, she is only able to understand it, but does not speak it often as she says that it is a complicated language and feels that a slight mispronunciation could lead to misunderstanding. According to her mother, R3IF16 used to speak some Sinhalese until she went to kindergarten. After that she switched to English as she had many Indian friends who only used Tamil and some Chinese friends who used Cantonese. English was also used as the medium of instruction in that particular kindergarten that she attended. She adds that she only uses English to speak to her parents, sister and brothers and also her maternal grandmother who lives a few rows away from her house. According to R3IF16, she only started learning Malay when she entered kindergarten and she admits that she is not fluent in this language. When I speak to her, she usually uses English as she does not code-mix as she is not proficient in either Sinhalese nor Malay.

#### 4.1.4 R4CF16

R4CF16 who is sixteen comes from a Chinese family and is proficient in Mandarin. She speaks and writes fluently in Mandarin as she was taught by her grandmother who is a retired Mandarin language teacher. The family speaks mostly in Mandarin at home, but R4CF16 speaks English to her elder sisters whenever she gets a chance. She says that speaking to them in English helps her to keep up with the

subjects taught in English namely Science and Mathematics. R4CF16 admits that she is quite close to her maid who is a Malay and she adds that she has improved in the language and regards her maid as her private tutor. Her father, who is currently working in Singapore, buys her English and Malay story books, but she prefers to read teen entertainment magazines like “Galaxy” which is in English as she feels that the English used in the magazine is easier to understand. The choice of reading material shows that she is exposed to the acrolectal variety of English at school through formal education and at home through her reading materials.

#### 4.1.5 R5IF16

R5IF16 is also 16 years old and she is of Tamil origin. Tamil is widely used at home. As her parents are away most of the time attending to their business, she spends most of her time with her grandmother who wants her grandchildren to speak Tamil at home. English is used sparingly when her parents are at home and according to her, she likes to speak English with her friends as she feels that it is a “beautiful” language. She also added that she really enjoys reading “Readers Digest” which she buys religiously every month. She admits that she has improved her command of English through reading and she further stresses that “Readers Digest” is the best reading materials for respondents. She also says that studying Science and Mathematics in English is very important to her. She adds that her teachers are very proficient in English and that is a major factor that helped her to achieve excellent results in English. R5IF16 is also fluent in Cantonese as she grew up with Chinese neighbours who were mostly Cantonese speakers., She still uses the language occasionally when she is with her close friends who speak Cantonese.

Table 4.1 below shows the similarities among all the respondents., where it can be concluded that the second language of all the respondents is considered English as

their second language, even when they spoke predominantly English rather than their heritage languages at home e.g. R3IF16. All the respondents also admitted that they use mostly English in schools during English lessons and while interacting with their English teachers. All of them were also taught Science and Mathematics in English and they agreed that learning these two subjects in English helped them to enhance their proficiency in English. This is because that they were constantly exposed to new vocabularies and terms along with a variety of sentence patters, as they were exposed to many types of reading materials such as reference books, notes and handouts. At the same time, they also agreed that when they are conversing with friends who are less competent in English, they mix words from other languages, mainly Malay and also Tamil with their Indian friends and Cantonese with their Chinese friends so that their friends can understand them better and the message can be conveyed clearly. Without realizing the meaning of the term “code-mixing”, they have been code-mixing with their friends.

Table 4.1 Language use by respondents

Respondent	Second language	English widely used in	English widely used with	Science and Mathematics learnt in	While conversing with friends
R1IF17	English	School	Teachers	English	English mixed with Malay and Tamil
R2MF17	English	School	Teachers	English	English mixed with Malay and Cantonese
R3IF16	English	School	Teachers	English	English mixed with Malay
R4CF16	English	School	Teachers	English	English mixed with Malay and Mandarin
R5IF16	English	School	Teachers	English	English mixed with Malay, Tamil and sometimes Cantonese

## 4.2 Results of the written test

The two types of written tests used gave an insight on their proficiency level of English as the scoring measures were not biased and there were no possible leakages as discussed in the earlier chapter. After marking the two tests, their marks were compiled. The results are presented in Table 4.2 It can be concluded that all the respondents are proficient in English as all of them scored 90% and above, which is an “A+” according the rubric used to determine their marks. Their marks show that all of them were able to use the acrolectal variety of English proficiently when it came to exams as their test was marked based on the acrolectal variety as shown in the marking rubric (see APP8)

Table 4.2 Marks obtained from the written test.

Markers	Full marks allocated	Marks obtained by respondents				
		R1IF17	R2MF17	R3IF16	R4CF16	R5IF16
1 <sup>st</sup> marker	100%	96	90	90	94	92
2 <sup>nd</sup> Maker	100%	90	92	90	92	91
Average	100%	93	91	90	93	91

## 4.3 Data from the reflective journals

The data derived from the reflective journals of the respondents was used to find if there are any similarities in the usage of the varieties of English used at home, school and among peers and how the usages affect the identity which involves group acceptance. The findings are presented in the sub-topics below and presented in Table 4.4 below. The patterns that emerge from the similarities would be discussed in the next chapter as a conclusion.

#### 4.3.1 The variety of English used with teachers in schools

From her journal entry, R1IF17 used Standard English when she spoke to her English teachers and other teachers who teach her Science and Mathematics in English as these teachers are also concerned about the correctness of the language apart from the subject being taught. R1IF17 also asserts that at school, her English teacher who has been teaching here since Form 1 is very particular about the type of English that the pupils use when they are talking to her. R1IF17 added that her teacher always asserts that “if a student can speak Standard English, then he or she can write Standard English”. When asked why she has to use Standard English with her teacher based on her journal entry, she stated that when she is speaking to her teacher, she has to use Standard English because that is what the teacher expects them to speak and she also adds that the teacher would grade their oral capabilities during the conversations. These grades are used for their School Based Oral Assessment or SBOA. Thus, she has to be very careful when she speaks with her teacher. She also said that her teacher has the habit of correcting her pupils when they speak to her, thus she makes sure that she uses the correct form of English or the Standard form and the usage of the “-lah” is not accepted by her teacher.. She added that this habit of speaking the Standard English has made her use it with other teachers who are trying to use the language in their lives. She also added, “By using the language correctly with these teachers who are not so proficient in English, I feel that I am a teacher and they are the students”.

On the same note, when R2MF17 was asked about the types of English that she uses in school, she explained that when talking to her teachers who teach English in her school, she uses the Standard English as her teachers are not in favour of Broken English. So she is very careful with her sentences and choice of words when speaking to them.

When asked about her language use in schools, R3IF16 said that in her classroom, they are encouraged to use the Standard English as her teachers who are teaching her stress this. She added that this is because when they use the Standard English, they would be able to write well and this would help them to get higher marks when it comes to subjective questions. She also added that they learn all Science and Mathematics in English which totals up to six subjects is English. She also added that her Physical Education teacher who was educated abroad uses English widely. Although the subject is in Malay, she and her friends have no complaints about this, in fact, they are more comfortable when their trainer uses English.

According to R4CF16, she only uses the Standard English when she speaks with her teachers who are educated in English. With the other teachers who are not proficient in English, she does not attempt to use English with them as she feels that it is easier to talk to them in Malay or Mandarin with her Chinese teachers. When asked to comment on her journal entries, she said that she has to use Standard English with her English teacher as she would be graded on her proficiency for the School Based Oral Assessment, and at the same time she admits that she has to prove to her teachers that she is able to speak Standard English although she is from a Chinese primary school. She also added that she needs to show that she is equally proficient in English when compared with her counterparts who are from the Malay medium schools and also a few who obtained their primary school education from international schools. When asked about her use of English in her examinations, she asserted that during exams, she uses Standard English so that she would be able to attain higher marks so that she would be at the top ten in her class. She also added that it is very important for her to be in the top ten students so that her parents would not “lose face” to their friends whose children are in her class. When asked how she would feel when she scores high marks in English, she answered that when she gets an A+ for her English, which she works hard to



achieve, she usually feels that she is someone great and loves the feeling when people say that she is good at English.

Just like the other respondents above, the fifth respondent, R5IF16 also uses Standard English with her English teachers as that is what the teachers want. She added that when she speaks with her English teachers, she is very careful with her accent as she knows that her teachers want her to speak without her Tamil accent. She says that “My Form 4 English teacher helped me to correct my accent, every time I spoke with her, and I have improved, but somehow it comes back to me because I think that it is in my blood!”.

#### 4.3.2 The variety of English used with friends

According to R1IF17, when she speaks with her friends who are very good in English, she uses Standard English and tries her best to use bombastic words as they do, so that she can blend in with them and they would accept her as one of the group members. On the other hand, she said that she would also feel comfortable when she speaks like them when she is with them. She also admitted that using the Standard English with this ‘elite’ group helps her to improve her English better. On the other hand, while she is with her friends who are less proficient in English, mostly those from rural vernacular schools, she said that she would use ‘broken’ English, so that these groups of friends can understand her at the same time, she is looked upon by them. These friends of hers regard her as someone who is very good in English and seek her help for their assignments and presentations which are in English. Here it shows that the different variety of English used with different people can create group acceptance which forms their group identity.

On the other hand, while speaking to her friends, R2MF17 uses Broken English as she feels that it is normal to use simple English to converse with friends as long as

they are able to understand her. With her friends who are less proficient in English, she added that she does not mind code mixing because by doing so, they would be able to understand her better as their vocabulary is not adequate to converse in Standard English.

In her journal, R3IF16 stated that she has to use the simplest form of English with lot of Malay when she interacts with the pupils from the weaker class as she is a member of The Peer Support Group where she has to help the weaker students with their English. When asked about this, she said that she is unable to use Standard English with them as they are not proficient in English and they even do not even know simple words. She also added that to in order to blend in with them, she has to come down to their level to assist them and help them on the subject. On the other hand, when she is with her peers from her own class, she admits that she uses Standard English as this would help her to improve in the subject and at the same time, she prefers to use this type of English at all times. When asked why, she said that using the Standard English gives increases her self-esteem and she feels good about it.

According to R4CF16, when she speaks with her circle of friends who are from different walks of life, she is more relaxed with them when it comes to English. In her interview, she said, "I use the Standard English with those who are good in English and with the rest; it is usually a mixture of languages." She also added that she tries to use Standard English with her friends who are weak in English but sometimes, they are not able to follow or understand her so she switches to code mixing.

The last respondent of this research, R5IF16, who is competent orally in four languages, which are Tamil, English, Malay and Cantonese, said that she has no problem using Standard English when she is with her friends as her group of friends use it, as a way of improving their language skill, but she said that she loves code mixing because sometimes it is easier to code mix rather than using the Standard English. She

also added that when she is conversing with this particular group of friends, she has to be extra careful with her choice of sentences and vocabularies as some of them are very good in English and she does not want to be corrected when she is with them. When asked about her teachers, she said that only her English teacher is very particular with the correct use of English while the others are comfortable with code- mixing.

#### 4.3.3 The type of English used at home

When asked about the language used when she is with her nieces and nephews, R11F17's sole answer initially was, "Bahasa Rojak lah". When asked to elaborate on it, she added, "When my nephews, nieces gather at my place, they are encouraged to speak in their mother tongue which is Tamil by their elders, but as they speak, all the other languages and the "-lah" comes in, thus making it a "jumbled-up language". She also feels that they enjoy speaking like that because it is easy and when some things cannot be explained in one language, they use words from other languages to make the conversation smoother. Although R2MF17 is a Malay, she is more comfortable speaking English with her friends. When asked why, she said, "I love English and I feel comfortable using it." This is because she has been educated in English and she has used English more English in schools than Malay. She also adds that since her parents are more comfortable with English, she follows their footsteps as they speak more English at home than Malay. When asked about her education background, she said that she went to a Montessori Kindergarten where a reading programme using Phonics which helped pupils to read faster was used .

When she was at primary school, she was taught Maths and Science in English and this too created a penchant for English. When asked about her Chinese grandmother, she said that when she is with her grandmother, she feels as she is in a different dimension as they speak in Cantonese and that creates a whole new language

context and she enjoys speaking to her grandmother in Cantonese. She also added that she is able to connect to her grandmother better when she speaks in Cantonese with her. When asked about her relatives' attitude towards when English is concerned, she said, "Some of my nephews have called me a hypocrite because I use more English than Malay but I am not bothered as I am comfortable using English and I love it and I will make sure that my children also use it". When it came to R3IF16, she openly admitted, "When it comes to family, we use all types of languages in one sentence with weird grammar". When asked to give an example, she said, "Well, sometimes we use *makaning* [are eating] or *lepaking* [chilling out]. For example, "I am *makaning* [are eating] *sooru* [rice] with *koli kari* [chicken curry]". She also explained that when she is with her siblings and cousins, they tend to use a mixture of English, Malay and also very little Sinhalese words, and that most of the time their conversations do not follow any correct sentence patterns or complete sentences. She added that during these meetings, she feels relaxed and takes things easy without giving much thought to the correctness of English that she uses.

When asked about the English used at home and with relatives, R4CF16 said that at home, she speaks English with her sisters, but it is mixed with either Cantonese words or Malay words or sometimes even both. She also admits that she is able to speak one sentence using all the three languages. When asked for an example, she said, "Come let's go to the *kedai mamak* [Indian Muslims restaurants] and *tapau* [take away] some *roti canai* [- flattened bread made from flour and oil],"

When asked why she just shrugged and says that it is normal to speak in such a way when she is with her siblings and of course when she speaks with her grandmother, she has to use Cantonese. When asked about her relatives and cousins, she said that most of the time they converse in Mandarin with a mixture of English and Malay. When asked why, she said that all her uncles and aunties were English-educated and went to

schools like Convent and St Pauls in Seremban, which are well established schools which were run by Christian Missionaries and they prefer to use English during family gatherings although her grandmother is usually annoyed with this scenario. On the other hand, R5IF16 admits that she enjoys speaking in the local dialect and code-mixes as she feels that she is able to express herself and her ideas are a lot better as it is interesting and also very convenient. This, she added happens when she joins with her nieces, nephews and cousins who are not good in English. When asked why should code switch and use, the local variety of English, she said that is using the Standard English they would feel intimidated and they would tease her that she is “acting” as though she is very good in English. Furthermore, they would tease her in Tamil which literary means, “You are eating *dhall* [lentils] but talking the white men’s language”, which can be a form of insult. So to avoid these situations, she joins them and goes down to their level and uses the same kind of language that they do. She added that rather being an “outsider” while with them, she prefers to join in the fun while using Bahasa Rojak which is code-mixing of multiple language.

With reference to the information derived from the previous section, it can be clearly seen that all the respondents use Standard English when they are conversing with their English teachers in school. With their friends and peers, they use more code-mixing, which is very similar to the mesolectal variety of English. The home language of the respondents differs. Table 4.3 shows the variety of English used at home, with teachers and with peers based on the information obtained from the reflective journal and the interviews.

Table 4.3 Variety of English used in different domains

Respondent	English used in schools with English teachers	English used with peers	English used at home
R1IF17	Standard English	English with a mixture of Malay	English with a mixture of Malay
R2MF17	Standard English	English with a mixture of Malay and Cantonese	English with a mixture of Malay and Cantonese
R3IF16	Standard English	English with a mixture of Malay	English with a mixture of Malay and some Sinhalese
R4CF16	Standard English	English with a mixture of Malay and Mandarin	English with a mixture of Malay and Mandarin
R5IF16	Standard English	English, Tamil and some Cantonese	English with a mixture of Malay, Tamil and some Cantonese

It can be said that, at home, these respondents use what they refer to as normal English which is Standard English with some code-mixing when these respondents meet up with their nieces and relatives who are in their age group during gatherings and festivals. All of them agree that they have to blend in into the group of youngsters and they have to “walk the walk and talk the talk” so that they would not be ridiculed for using “high standard English”. According to the respondents, if they use the Standard English, they would be treated as an outsider and in some cases, called “show offs” thus to avoid this situation, they resort to the colloquial English with a generous amount of code mixing.

#### 4.4 The relationship between English usage and group acceptance

The data collected through the reflective journals and the interview, some similar patterns regarding English and usage and identity emerged. The findings show that these respondents, generally, play different roles when they are using different

varieties of English at different domains. The findings, according to each participant are presented in the following section.

It can be said that R1IF17 plays different parts when she is with different types of people so that she is accepted as a member of the particular group, thus, she has different identities which are formed by the acceptance of the groups. When she uses English with different people in different domains. This proves that teenagers have their own identities when it comes to languages, just like adults.

During the interview with R2MF17, when it came to Section C of interview, which involved language and identity, she said that with some of her friends, she had to resort to code-mixing because it is a trend among them as they use English and Malay at the same time to speak with a generous use of the particle “-la” She also added that she feels comfortable in doing so although this group of friends is proficient in English and are also high scorers in school exams.

From what could be gathered through her interview, it can be said that R2MF17 is comfortable using different types of English in different situations and she is able to blend into the situation and the group that she is with, by using the accepted language of the certain group. Although proficient in English, she is able to switch from the Standard English to the local varieties with ease. When it comes to formal domains such as exams and conversing with teachers, she is able to use the Standard English, as she put it. Apart from that, through her journal entries, it is clear that she is able to use different types of English with different groups at different domains. Just like R1IF17, she is also able to switch from one variety to another when the situations demands.

When R3IF16 was asked if the language she uses reflects the real her, she took a few minutes to answer. She said that sometimes, she feels that she is a different person when she is with a different group of friends or relatives. As a whole from her interview and journal entries, I am able to conclude that R3IF16, just like the earlier respondents,

is able to switch from one variety to the other according to their needs in different domains and needs.

During the interview, R4CF16 used Standard English at the beginning, but as she became more relaxed, she started code mixing, but she is able to switch to the Standard English when she realized that she had used too much of Malay rather than English. This shows that this respondent is very apt in switching from one variety to another consciously. When asked about the different type of English used with different people, she said that she has to use different varieties with different people so that the correct message can be sent and it would be easier to understand one and other. At the same time, she added that it is not a difficult task and it comes naturally and she feels she has to play different roles with different group of people where English is concerned.

As a conclusion, the findings show that the respondents are able to switch from one variety to another variety according to the situation or domain that they are in, Moreover, they are conscious regarding the switching of varieties but they do not seem to have any difficulties doing so. When it comes to identity, these respondents use different varieties of English with different groups so that they are accepted as the group member, thus establishing different identities with different groups.

#### 4.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, the findings from the data analyses were presented to show emerging similar patterns regarding the use of different varieties of English at different domains and also group acceptance of respondents using these varieties. In the next chapter, the findings will be discussed.



## CHAPTER 5

### DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

#### 5.0 Introduction

The analysis of the instruments used in this paper has given a lot of information which was explained in the previous chapter. The findings have revealed that there is a relationship between the varieties of English used in different domains and the concept of identity which involved group acceptance and also the people involved in the conversations. This section will further discuss the findings in relation to the research questions.

#### 5.1 The English used in schools and at home

Through the questionnaire and the interviews carried out, it can be concluded that all these five respondents use Standard English at schools and sometimes even at home. As they are required to use the Standard variety when they are conversing with their teachers, the respondents speak using this variety here. Although these respondents can all use the colloquial variety of Malaysian English with their teachers and during lessons in school they are able to use the acrolectal variety with ease and without any problem as derived from their responses during the interviews, and in the questionnaires. Apart from the acrolectal variety, these respondents use the mesolectal variety with the teachers who do not converse in Standard English as they are non-English optionists. We can conclude that the respondents know which variety of English to be used in appropriate domains and with whom. For example, with their relatives and friends, who are less proficient in English, they use the mesolectal variety and with those who use the acrolectal variety they use the same variety.

It can be concluded that at home, the mesolectal variety of English is very widely used with family members and relatives while in schools, the acrolectal variety of English is used mostly in all formal context classroom contexts and in examinations. To answer the first research question, it can be said that although the domain, in which the variety of English is used is important, the people involved in the conversations or the interlocutors also play an important role. Thus, even in the formal domain, such as schools, these respondents use the mesolectal variety with their teachers who are less proficient in the language.

## 5.2 The switching of English varieties

With their friends who are very proficient in English, all these five respondents agree that they too have to use the Standard English so that they would be able to be on the same “level” as their friends are, thus securing a membership in the group. At the same time these respondents, when conversing with their peers and relatives, who are not proficient in English, tend to bring down their level of English to suit their interlocutors. They do this by shedding their acrolectal variety of English and switching to the mesolectal variety, and code-switching as most of their peers are bilingual, if not multilingual. Although they prefer to use the acrolectal variety even at homes, they are forced to use the mesolectal variety to avoid being ridiculed or denied being accepted into their conversations.

From the discussion in the previous sections, it can be concluded that the respondents in this study are able to switch from one variety of English to another to suit the different interlocutors in different contexts. This is done every day at school, home and while they are with their friends. Firstly, they have to switch from one variety of English to another because they are forced to use the acrolectal variety of English with their English teachers and during examinations as this is what is expected of them.

Secondly, they have to use other varieties of English so that they are accepted in groups which comprises peers or relatives who are less proficient in English, and who are more comfortable using the mesolectal variety. Thus, in relation to the second research question, it can be concluded that these respondents are able to switch from the mesolectal variety to the acrolectal variety frequently and vice versa when the need arrives.

### 5.3 The relationship between the use of English and identity

When they are with their English teachers and using the Standard English they claim to be someone who feels that they are proficient in English and while they are using the mesolectal variety with the other non-English optionists, they feel that they are more relaxed and comfortable using the mesolectal variety.

Here again, these respondents are able to take up different roles when they are at home with their relatives, in this case, their nephews, nieces and cousins. This is because, these respondents are using the mesolectal variety so that they are accepted into these small groups and they feel that it is important for them to be accepted in these groups.

It is very clear that these respondents take up different identities at different domains where the interlocutors differ. The same teenager who is able to portray a different identity when she speaks in very good English is able to switch her identity to become a teenager who uses the mesolectal variety without any difficulties at all. Apart from that, they are very meticulous with the choice of vocabulary and the use of grammar when they are using the acrolectal variety, but when conversing in the mesolectal variety, they follow the norm of the group, in relation to grammar and vocabulary. It is interesting to note that the variety of English used by these respondents can be used to determine their identity which involves group acceptance according to

the group in which they are. As the concept of identity in this paper refers to group acceptance, it can be clearly seen through their interview that they change their variety of English to suit certain groups. They do this so that they are accepted by the particular group. In conclusion, the identity they reflect in various domains and situations is very much related to the variety of English that they use. To put it in a nutshell, when these respondents use the acrolectal variety of English, they portray a different identity which reflects them as a good and proficient user of English and at the other hand, when they use the mesolectal variety, they reflect as a normal teenager who is just using English as a tool of communication to communicate effectively with their peers who are less proficient in the language. At home, with relatives and cousins, they are in a very relaxed domain and portray a different identity, where kinship is given priority and language comes next. Here, these respondents are seen as one of the group members when they use a lot of code-mixing as they blend into the particular group of children who prefer to converse in such way.

According to Palfreyman (2005:2033), “identity constructions related to language use may be an element of “othering” based on differences in the language used between groups”. The concept of “othering” refers to “the practice of comparing ourselves to others and at the same time distancing ourselves from them” (ibid), but through this study, it can be said that these respondents go against the concept of “othering” because they are trying to blend into these groups as they want to be accepted as a group member without any problem. When they are accepted in a particular group and become one of the members, the respondents feel that they have the identity of the group. When R4CF16 said that she has to change her way of speaking to suit the “elite” English users, she was really trying to go against “othering” so that she can be one of the elite group members. At the same time she does not choose to be alienated as the concept of “othering” explains.

#### 5.4 Limitations

This study is limited as it explores the language use among five female teenagers from the same residential area, and examines how identity is related only with reference to the variety of English and other languages they use in different domains. For the collection of data, observations were not done as there was a time constrain. For future studies, the language use between female teenagers and boys should be researched to find the similarities and the differences.

#### 5.6 Conclusion

As Malaysians, these respondents who are multilingual female teenagers are exposed to the varieties of English used here. Although they are able to use the acrolectal variety in their schools and exams, they are able to switch to the mesolectal variety when they are conversing with their teachers who are less proficient or peers at school and their family members at home. These respondents are also able to switch the variety of English that they use, according to the people that they are conversing with so that they are accepted in the group. This shows that using different varieties of English can also determine one's group acceptance and identity.

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APPENDIX

QUESTIONNAIRE 1 : PERSONAL DETAILS

APP 1

A. RESPONDENTS BACKGROUND

1. Name: \_\_\_\_\_

2. Gender: \_\_\_\_\_

3. Age: \_\_\_\_\_

4. Race : \_\_\_\_\_

5. Religion : \_\_\_\_\_

6. Next of Kin : \_\_\_\_\_

7. Mother tongue: \_\_\_\_\_

8. Second Language : \_\_\_\_\_

9. Third Language : \_\_\_\_\_

10 Forth Language : \_\_\_\_\_

11. Languages used at home: a. \_\_\_\_\_

b. \_\_\_\_\_

c. \_\_\_\_\_

12, Your preferred language: \_\_\_\_\_

13. Hobbies : a. \_\_\_\_\_ b. \_\_\_\_\_

14. Favourite reading materials: a. \_\_\_\_\_

b. \_\_\_\_\_

15. Favourite television shows: a. \_\_\_\_\_

b. \_\_\_\_\_

**B. EDUCATION BACKGROUND**

1. Did you attend kindergarten? Yes / No

2. Main language used in kindergarten : a. \_\_\_\_\_

b. \_\_\_\_\_

3. Name of primary school: \_\_\_\_\_

4. Science and Mathematics were taught in \_\_\_\_\_

5. Name of secondary school: \_\_\_\_\_

6. Science and Mathematics are taught in \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Please write your response in the space provided.

1. What I know about Standard English:

---

---

2. What I know about code-mixing (after listening to the briefing by the researcher).

---

---

3. What I know about code-switching (after listening to the briefing by the researcher).

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---

4. How do I improve my English:

---

---

5. Why do I like to speak in English:

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---

6. Where I speak English most?

---

---

7. When do I speak English most?

---

---

8. What do I do when I speak to my friend who is weak in English?

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LETTER OF CONSENT

APP 4

TITLE: "LANGUAGE USE AMONG MALAYSIAN TEENAGE GIRLS"

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Re: Letter of Consent

I, the above mentioned, the father of \_\_\_\_\_ hereby give my consent to Murugan Raj A/l Tanaraj who wishes to use my daughter \_\_\_\_\_ as a participant in his research project on her own will.

I understand that data for the research will be collected via questionnaires, interviews and reflective journals. I also understand that my daughter can withdraw from participating from the research should she feel stressed or overburden with the tasks given.

I also understand that there are no known risk factors or any other factors that can jeopardize my daughter's studies. Besides that I also know that there is no monetary funds are involved.

Thank you.

Yours sincerely,

\_\_\_\_\_

( )

Adapted from Cresswell (2008:159)

## INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

( The interview questions are asked after some pleasantries and maybe a few jokes to make the participant feel relaxed and at ease.)

### A: CHOICE OF LANGAUGE (Answers Research Question 1)

1. What languages do you know?
2. What are the languages that you use at home?
3. Which is the most frequently used language at home?
4. Which language is your favourite one?
5. Why?
6. What languages do you use in school?
7. Which language do you use the most?
8. Why?

### B. ENGLISH USED IN DIFFERENT DOMAIN (Answers Research Question 2)

1. When you speak, do you mix English with other languages?
2. Why do you mix with other languages when you are good in English?
3. Which languages are they?
4. When you speak to your parents, what variety of English do you use?
5. Why?
6. When you speak to your friends, what variety of English do you use?
7. Why?
8. When you speak to your cousins, what variety of English do you use?
9. Why?
10. When you speak to your teachers, what variety of English do you use?
11. With your friends?

12. Lets say a friend of yours who is weak in English, talks to you in broken English. how do you respond?

C. IDENTITY VIA LANGUAGE USAGE (Answers Research Question 3)

1. When do you use Standard English?
2. How do you feel when you do so?
3. When do you use broken English?
4. How do you feel when do so?
5. What variety of English do you like your friends to use?
6. Why?
7. Do you feel that you play a different role when you speak different variety of English?
8. Can you please explain how?
9. Why do you use different variety of English with different group of friends?

(The interview is ended with a note of thanks and a small gift, just to show appreciation,)

Adapted from : [http://www.eduers.com/resume/How\\_to\\_Conduct\\_an\\_Interview.htm](http://www.eduers.com/resume/How_to_Conduct_an_Interview.htm)



Sample of Interview Response Sheet

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Time: \_\_\_\_\_ Place: \_\_\_\_\_

1.

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2.

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3.

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4.

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SAMPLE OF REFLECTIVE JOURNAL

Respondent's Code:\_\_\_ Date: \_5/11/2013\_\_\_\_\_

Day:\_\_\_Monday\_\_\_\_\_

Talked to	Place	Nature of Conversation	Variety of English used	Reasons
(English Teacher)	Staff Room	Discussion of English Project paper	Correct English	Teacher only wants us to use correct English when writing reports. She corrected my 'lahs' But during recess, I heard her using Bahasa Rojak.
My classmates	Classroom	Discussion of English Homework	Correct English	They are good in English, so I have to follow their style so that I can talk with them for a long time.
Friends from the 4 <sup>th</sup> class	Moral Class (Combined class)	General discussion	English with a lot of code mixing	Since they are weak in English, all of us used simple English with a lot of words from BM and Tamil. Fun talking to them. If I use mixture of languages, they can understand me.
Nephews and nieces	At home	Discussion of India tour	English with code mixing and switching	Had to use English of their level so that I can blend in or else they will 'kutuk' my correct English. They might also stop talking to me and leave me alone.

RUBRIC FOR FREE WRITING

CATEGORY	LOW 1-7	FAIR 8-15	ABOVE AVERAGE 16-24	EXCELLENT 25-30
INTRODUCTION	There is no clear introduction to the main topic or structure of the paper.	The introduction states the main topic, but does not adequately preview the structure of the paper nor is it particularly inviting to the reader.	The introduction clearly states the main topic and previews the structure of the paper, but is not particularly inviting to the reader.	The introduction is inviting, states the main topic and previews the structure of the paper.
BODY OF ESSAY/ REFERENCING	The main ideas in all paragraphs are not clear. There is a strong evidence of plagiarism.	One of the paragraphs has a clear main idea. Only some supporting details are appropriate and relevant. Most outside sources are not cited/ referenced properly.	The main ideas of both paragraphs are clear. Most supporting details are appropriate and relevant. Most outside sources are properly cited/ referenced.	There is one clear, well-focused topic. Main idea stands out and is supported by detailed information. All outside sources are properly cited/ referenced.
CONCLUSION	There is no clear conclusion, the paper just ends.	The conclusion is recognizable, but does not effectively close the essay.	The conclusion is recognizable and gives closure to the essay.	The conclusion is strong and leaves the reader with a feeling that they understand what the writer is "getting at."
COHERENCE	Writing contains major mistakes in the use of cohesive devices that affected general understanding.	There are attempts to use cohesive devices but the writing lacks direction that affected reader's comprehension.	There are clear attempts to use cohesive devices to link details but in one or two places, writing appears incoherent.	Details are placed in a logical order and the way they are presented effectively keeps the interest of the reader.
LANGUAGE/ GRAMMAR	The writer makes a lot of errors in grammar, structure or spelling that affects reader's comprehension.	The writer makes some errors in grammar, structure, or spelling that affects reader's understanding.	The writer makes minimal errors in grammar, structure and spelling that does not affect the reader's understanding.	The writer makes no errors in grammar or spelling that distracts the reader from the content.

