Colloquial Malaysian English (CMalE):

A problem or a cool phenomenon?

Masters of International Communication and Teaching of Languages

Course 2014-2015

Master's Thesis

UNIVERSITAT JAUME·I

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Abstract

The phenomenon of Colloquial Malaysian English (CMalE), or *Manglish* as known by Malaysians, is a long-debated topic on whether the usages of this form of English butchers the purity of the language itself, that is, of the native speakers; or, if it is a cool phenomenon.

This research article attempts to present an analysis on CMalE with the purpose to find out if the usage of this form of English would affect the purity of the English language for Malaysian English speakers, or if this is just a cultural phenomenon that does not affect the interlocutor's ability to use the language in the standard form when the occasion arises.

El fenómeno acuñado como 'inglés malasio coloquial' o Manglish, como se conoce comúnmente entre los malasios, se halla en el centro del debate desde hace mucho tiempo. Esto es así porque hay dos concepciones respecto a esta modalidad de habla, la de quienes consideran que esta variante del inglés destruye la pureza del inglés estándar hablado por los anglohablantes malasios, y la de quienes entienden que se trata de un fenómeno cultural que no afecta, en modo alguno, a la habilidad del interlocutor para usar la lengua estándar cuando la ocasión lo requiera.

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1. **Introduction**.

Malaysia, a country located in the South East Asia, is one of the many countries previously colonised by the British government. This means that the English language was once the primary medium of communication in the country, however in 1957 when Malaya (as the country was known then) gained her independence; things have since changed. English became a second language instead of being the official medium, and more emphasis has then been placed upon the Malay language and the other languages of the other races in Malaysia (consisting, but not exclusively limited to the Chinese and Indian dialects).

Since then, the English language in Malaysia has evolved into what is known as the present-day Malaysian English. Malaysian English does not only consist of an array of sub-varieties (Gaudart 2000: 47) but is also spoken in a multitude of accents due to the different ethnical and educational backgrounds, as Pillai has noted, ranging from the less ethnically and geographically marked accents heard on the national television news to a more Americanised accent of urban teenagers (Pillai, 2014:55). Depending on the crowd that a speaker is in, it is also very common to notice that a Malaysian can switch accents of English be it as an identity marker or to assimilate with speakers from other backgrounds, ethnically, geographically, or based on the current situation the speakers are in (e.g. formal or informal).

In this study, there is a need to explain the idea of Malaysian English (ME), which, in this study, will refer to an umbrella term of all the varieties of English spoken in Malaysia, although this term is sometimes used derogatorily to refer to the colloquial English in Malaysia, more commonly known as *Manglish*. The colloquial variety of the Malaysian English (CMalE) is the most spoken variety of English in the country. This variety of English is most used in Malaysia between Malaysians when communicating in less formal to informal situations as this form of the language presents an easier avenue for Malaysians to get their messages across, and is known among Malaysians as "effective" English as it is short and simple, with influences of other languages to insert a local flavour, and closeness into the language.

According to Young (2008), the mechanisms of *adequation*, which involves the pursuit of socially recognized sameness, and *distinction,* which is a mechanism whereby salient difference is produced (Bucholtz and Hall, 2004:383, 384) are used in the usage of CMalE. This is seen when users of the variety of language think that while learning the standard version of English is important (adequation), the assimilation of accent and grammatical form amongst Malaysians are not necessary (distinction) (Young, 2008:10).

Colloquial Malaysian English (CMalE) is loosely defined as "the commingling of Malay and English...which implicitly suggests that any such mixture is the mangled version of one language or the other"[1]. In Malaysia, as mentioned earlier, CMalE is known as "*Manglish*". It is similar to *Singlish*, which is the Singaporean colloquial English, but with more variety of languages in the mix. A personal definition of what CMalE is would be "a type of colloquial English derived from a *potpourri* mix of Malay as well as other languages in Malaysia into the English language, and is solely used in Malaysia."

The reason of this study being held is because of different Malaysians' view on the topic of the colloquial version of the Malaysian English: there is one side, thinking that the colloquial version of the Malaysian English (or commonly known as *Manglish*) poses a problem to the Malaysians, raising the usage of the language as an issue to the mass via newspaper articles (see What's there to boast when we're speaking Manglish?, 2009; Why Speak Manglish?, 2007; Manglish-English dilemma, 2007) while some others retorted with an opposite viewpoint stating that the language is not a problem, but instead a cultural identity and is now a creole on its own which represents the country in a very unique way (Proud of Manglish?,2012). There are also expatriates as well as visiting non-Malaysians who wrote their views into local newspapers stating their fascination on the language and supporting the views stating that the usage of the colloquial variety of Malaysian English does not pose a problem to Malaysians, but instead a unique variety of the language (Linguist: It's okay to speak Manglish, 2012; Manglish also can?, 2012).

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[1] Definition extracted from Zimmer, Benjamin in his article "**MALAYSIA CRACKS DOWN ON "SALAD LANGUAGE"** written in October 05, 2006 from http://itre.cis.upenn.edu/~myl/languagelog/archives/003643.html.

Therefore, both views led to a personal intrigue of the writer to find out if the colloquial variety of the English language is a problem to Malaysians, or if it is a "cool" phenomenon. The reason why the phrase "cool phenomenon" is used for this study is because "cool" signifies "great" or "fine" in slang; hence the usage is to represent adaptability to the current generation and is an evolving and constantly used language. "Phenomenon" is used as a choice word as one of the meaning of the word is "a fact, occurrence, or circumstance observed or observable". This study will be conducted through a series of research questions in an interview which is held among Malaysians which allow the result to be an observable fact. Therefore, there is relevance to the word "phenomenon" as the title of this study.

I have a hypothesis for this research: CMalE is not a problem in the Malaysian society, but a cool phenomenon if a Malaysian English speaker with at least an average proficiency of English could switch between CMalE and the standard version of English easily. In this study, the "standard" variety of English will refer to the acrolect version of Malaysian English, which is the English variety in Malaysia that approximates most closely to the standard variety of English. If the hypothesis is proven, it also becomes a variety in the English language that sets Malaysians apart from the rest of the English speakers in the world.

To accurately explain what CMalE is, there would be a brief description of the identity of Malaysia: her people, culture, and languages to expose the reader to how Malaysia is like as a country. This explanation is seen in Chapter 2, where the reader will see a short introduction to the country's population, different ethnicities, as well as the variety of languages that are available.

It bears mentioning how English came into the country. This refers to the historical part of Malaysia's journey from the introduction of English by the English colonisers solely for economical purposes, then using the language as the lingua franca of the country, to Malaysia adapting English as one of her languages after her independence in 1957, which eventually brought to what is known now as Malaysian English (ME), that is the acrolectal version of the standard English spoken in Malaysia.

Then, a detailed explanation of the phenomenon of CMalE; that is, depending on its usage; the mesolectal and the basilectal version of the ME, the reason for the existence of the language and examples of its usages in Malaysia through journals by Malaysian and non-Malaysian writers on ME and CMalE, followed by an explanation of the research questions used for this study in Chapter 3. In Chapter 4, there will be an explanation of the methodology utilised in this study. Then, in Chapter 5, the analysis of the results of the study will be discussed and concluded, and then finally, a general conclusion will be made in Chapter 6 of this research article. There will also be a Compact Disc attached to the last page of this research article to help readers to understand the sound and dynamics of the CMalE when spoken in contrast to ME.

To reiterate the focus of this study, the assumption for this study is that the usage of CMalE if a Malaysian's knowledge of the standard variety of English is sufficient and stable, that is, with at least an average proficiency in the English language, the switch from CMalE to the standard version would not be an issue, therefore proving that the phenomenon of CMalE is a "cool" one instead of being a problem for the Malaysian English speakers.

2. Background Study on Malaysia

In this chapter, the focus will be placed on Malaysia: the country's demography, culture, and language as well as the history to the introduction of the English language into the country which then leads to the explanation of how CMalE was born postcolonially. Also in section 2.5.1, there will be an explanation of a different variety of the CMalE which originates from the east of Malaysia, namely states in the Borneo Islands known as Sabah and Sarawak to bring forth a more wholesome view the study of CMalE.

2.1 Malaysia: Demography, Culture, and Language.

Malaysia is a multiracial, multicultural, and multireligious society. The country consists of 16 states; 13 in West Malaysia (Perlis, Kedah, Penang, Perak, Negeri Sembilan, Pahang, Selangor, Federal Territory of Kuala Lumpur, Federal Territory of Putrajaya, Malacca, Kelantan, Terengganu, and Johor) , and 3 in the East Malaysia (Sabah, Sarawak, and Federal Territory of Labuan).

This country is built up of mainly Malays, Chinese, and Indians as well as the Malaysian indigenous races and other races such as the Eurasians, Kristang (also known as the Portuguese-Eurasians), and immigrants who came to Malaysia to work, such as the Indonesians. It is also important to note that the Malays, as well as the non-Malay indigenous groups, are awarded the status of "*Bumiputera*" in Malaysia, which, translated, means "princes of the land". This term refers to the original people of Malaysia.

According to the population clock from the website of Malaysia's Statistics Department, Malaysia is a country with a population of 30,062,229 people. As of 2010, the Department stated that Bumiputras make up 67.4% of the population, Chinese (24.6%), Indians, (7.3%), with other races making up the remaining 0.7%[2].

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[2] Reference taken from the Population Clock of the Malaysia's Statistics Department website
https://www.statistics.gov.my/index.php?r=home/index&menu_id=b2ROaWpITmQ5NnAvMHVmRjRkZzlBQT09.

Culturally, Malaysia is a country with multi-ethnic, multicultural and multilingual influences. The origin of the Malaysia came from the indigenous people who inhabited the area before civilization and eventually along with the Malays, who later immigrated to the land from different places around the Malay Archipelago. Foreign trade began as the Malaysian civilization developed which led to the immigration of the Indians and Chinese from India and China respectively. There were also hints of the Persian, Arabic and British cultures in this country, and currently there are more Middle East influences as more Middle Easterns are making their way into Malaysia nowadays.

The main languages of Malaysia are Malay (the official language) and English. However, due to the multiracial elements in the country, there are many different languages that are being spoken in Malaysia. For example, the Chinese in Malaysia speaks different Chinese dialects: among many, Mandarin, Cantonese, Hokkien, Hakka, Teochew, and Hainanese. Then, one can also observe the same case among the Indians in Malaysia with dialects such as Telegu, Malayalam, Tamil, Punjabi, and Hindi. Creole languages like the Kristang[3] from the Kristang people, as well as the Baba Creole from the Baba and Nyonya race, are also spoken in Malaysia, and last but not least, the indigenous languages.[4]

2.2 Malaysia and English: The Origin.

The origins of English education in Malaysia can be traced back to the late 18th century-early 19th century all the way to the 20th century during the British colonization era in back then Malaya, which consisted only of the Malay Peninsula, with the first missionary school constituted in Penang in 1816. According to Gaudart (1987), initially, very little importance was placed on the weight of education for the residents of Malaya because "the British felt that large-scale teaching of English would estrange children from their parents and give them an inflated sense of their importance. English had to be taught only within limits."

However, in the late 19th century the British had a change of mind regarding the matter and advocated the development of English language education as it facilitated the meeting of demands of the advent of commerce and administration in the British economy in the Malayan

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[3] Refer to Holm, J. (1988). Malayo-Portuguese. In *Pidgins and creoles: Volume II: Reference survey*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. for more details regarding the language.
[4] Reference found from http://joshuaproject.net/countries/MY?sort=Population&direction=desc&pagin=500

territory, especially with the immigration of the Chinese and Indian into the country, with the Chinese taking charge of the economic/commerce flow and the Indians with the administrative roles. Most Malays were living in the rural areas then and hence, they attended vernacular Malay schools or religious schools (built by the Muslim evangelists) instead of the English schools which are mostly available in the urban areas. Gaudart (1987) said:

"The only exception to the education of Malays was the setting up of a special English medium school to train the upper echelons of Malay society. The British believed that as these upper-class Malay children were to be the leaders of the people, they should receive special training (Ibrahim Saad, 1979:136-8). Accordingly, the Malay College was set up in Kuala Kangsar, and was to be the prototype, many years later, of the residential schools that now exist in various parts of the country. It was also from the Malay College that the first nationalist dissidents against the British arose (Chai, 1977:25)."

In the 20th century, the Malay Peninsula was plagued with war (World War II), insurrection of communism, Malay nationalism, and communal politics. Less attention was placed on learning the English language or immersing oneself in the English education by the people, and more emphasis was placed on the vernacular education (the Malay, Chinese and Indian schools), as the Malay Peninsula prepared herself to pursue national independence. Chai observed that the vernacular schools promoted more ethnocentricity as the schools taught them the respective worldviews of each culture respectively so that they may identify with their culture and maintain them, but they were all increasingly inappropriate with the rapidly-changing political, social, and economic situations of a country preparing for independence (Chai, 1977:26).

On the other hand, the English schools were only promoting Western values that caused concern for elimination of the respective culture of each race in the educational system of Malaya during that time. The British government initially intended to develop the Malay vernacular education alongside the English schools and eliminate the Chinese and Indian vernacular schools altogether from the Malayan education system, but it was met with a storm of protest from the Chinese community, which led to the Fenn-Wu report in 1951 by Dr William Fenn (an American) and Dr. Wu Teh-yao (a United Nations' official).

The Fenn-Wu Report (1951) in the 2nd chapter states that the Chinese government were concerned about the elimination of Chinese schools, and with it the possible elimination of their culture. It therefore recommended that what ought to be considered was not the elimination of Chinese schools and the suppression of Chinese culture, but a system of education in which pupils in Chinese schools would, besides learning Chinese, also learn Malay and English. This system would make the Chinese medium pupils trilingual and all other pupils at least bilingual. Chinese schools would thus be integrated into the national system and yet not be destroyed.

Eventually, post-independence Malaya in 1957 and onwards brought with it a decision on developing the Malay language as the official language of the country with English as a secondary language, up to modern-day Malaysia. The name change from "Malaya" to "Malaysia" was to commemorate the joining together of Singapore, North Borneo (present-day Sabah) and Sarawak in 1963. Singapore then left the establishment in 1965.

2.3 Postcolonial English in Malaysia.

After 1957, the role of English in the then-known Federation of Malaya (the Malay Peninsula except Singapore) as the only official language was retained. Additionally, the Malay language's status was raised to being the official language. The clear idea of retaining English as the co-official language at that moment was to ease the process of gradually introducing and developing Malay as the official language. Then, after a ten-year transition period, the government would entirely remove the status of English as the official language.

The ten-year transition period was lengthened, as in 1963, Federation of Malaya and Singapore is united with North Borneo and Sarawak, constituting the country known today as Malaysia. Two years later, in 1965, Singapore withdrew from the establishment and became a country on her own. The special status of English in Malaysia was gradually eliminated as the official language regionally; Peninsula Malaysia in 1967, Sabah in 1973, and finally in Sarawak in 1985. The Malay language overtook the role as the national language.

The idea of replacing English with the Malay language as the official language also was an element in the power struggle between the Malays and the Chinese and South Asians, which were becoming increasingly wealthier and more influential in the region. As Gill pointed out, it was a logical and somewhat unavoidable step on the government's side to deprive English of its

status, otherwise the Malay language would not have room for development at all. Hence, educationally, the English-medium schools were gradually converted into Malay-medium schools up to the university level from 1969 onwards to 1983. Today, as remarked by Jernudd (2003), *Bahasa Malaysia* (the Malay language) has established itself as the official language of Malaysia (Gill, 2002:59).

The policy of "Vision 2020", brainchild of Former Prime Minister, Tun Dr. Mahathir Mohamed which aspires to turn Malaysia into a fully developed country by that year implied, as Schneider (2007) remarked, "...emphasis on globalisation and technological advancement requires full fluency in English on the side of Malaysian engineers and business people, amongst others." (p. 148).

This policy consequently led to the approval of the reinstruction of English in technical subjects in the Education Act of 1996. However in 1993, during its earlier proposals, it was rejected by the Malay Intellectual Congress with the argument that the said reintroduction of the English language in the technical sciences would weaken further developments of the Malay language, causing the new English-medium policy for Mathematics and the Sciences (Physics, Chemistry and Biology as well as the general sciences for non-science major students) to be put into effect in 2003. However, this policy has since been eliminated, and these subjects are currently taught in Malay again from 2012.

The English language in Malaysia since her independence has undergone much opposition; however despite that, the English language has managed to proceed into being a part of the Malaysian education and culture, divided into three types: the acrolect, mesolect, and basilect.

The acrolect version, where the language is still preserved in its original form, but the differences are seen in pronunciation and borrowing of words from the Malay, Chinese or Indian languages; such as *baju kurung* (a traditional Malay outfit for females), *dimsum* (a typical Cantonese mix of small dishes, normally served as breakfast), and *saree* (a typical Indian outfit for females). The acrolect version of Malaysian English is the official version of ME.

Then, there is a mix of languages, with English as the more salient language in the second version of ME, also known as the mesolect version of the ME. This is due to the fact that bilingualism and multilingualism in Malay, English, and other ethnic languages and dialects are common in Malaysia. Gill said:

"*The mesolect is the variety that is used for intranational communication*

between Malaysians of varying ethnicity, as a medium of local communication"

(2002:52)

For examples, Malaysians tend to say "*please pass up your homework*" instead of "*please hand in your homework*", and quoting King (2012), this is caused more by the mother tongue influence than a lack of awareness. The mesolect version of the Malaysian English is used freely in offices, at meetings, and on the phone, for example; but it is never used in a formal occassion.

After that, there is another mix of languages, this time with the dialects or the mother tongue being the more salient language due to a lack of proficiency in English, and that is the basilect mix. This is also known as the CMalE, or known among Malaysians as *Manglish.* Examples of sentences constructed in CMalE will be given in section 2.5.

Most of the time, Malaysians communicate among themselves in English, which goes to show that the English language is still holding a strong position in interethnic communication. David remarked that the English language in Kuala Lumpur (the capital city), as well as other urban areas, is being acquired as a mother tongue in some communities (David, 2002:65). However, this community is not a substantial one (Asmah (2002) estimates it to be about 1% of the population). Yet, David (2002) again states the importance of this group by citing slang terms which these young Malaysians coin and use to express their group identity.

It is also widely available in the media, through radio, television, and daily newspapers, for daily exposure and acquisition, in reference to passive language-learning skills. It is noteworthy to say that 31.6% of Malaysians listen to English radio stations (Gill, 2002:85). Asmah said that English is rather naturally acquired by children living in the *kampungs* (villages in rural areas) through TV blockbusters in the English language. She found that the children

could understand the shown programmes albeit being unable to form a fluent sentence in English (Asmah, 2002:19).

2.4 <u>Malaysian English (ME).</u>

In the previous sections in this chapter, we have looked at the status of English in Malaysia from the beginning of its introduction into the then-known Malayan education system during the British colonisation of the country up to its status today. The evidences seen from other researchers show that in some circles, the influence of English in Malaysia is not just confined to formal, international and business uses. Nair-Venugopal (2000) stated that in some informal business trainings, mesolectal Malaysian English is the preferred medium of communication to enhance solidarity and decrease social distance. In other words, as noted by Gill, the informal register of English in Malaysia, which has become an unmarked everyday language in different social contexts has caused English to lose a huge portion of its former elitist character (Gill, 2002:91).

Somehow, ME has served as a carrier of a distinct Malaysian identity; a role which *Bahasa Malaysia* should specially hold. There are some related statements to prove this statement further:

A) "Nativised English (...) is perfectly acceptable for communicating socially and informally(...) gives one a strong sense of identity" (Gill, 2002:47).

B) We have developed a generation of Malaysians who very comfortably communicate in informal English- English which is Malaysian in identity- and this is reflected by the distinct phonology influenced by their ethnic tongues, lexical items which are socioculturally grounded and syntactic structures which are distinctly Malaysian in form. This is the English that is used by Malaysians to create rapport and establish our new sense of identity (Gill, 2002:91).

C) ME [is] the sociolect of pan-Malaysian identity (Nair-Vernugopal, 2000:224).

D) "There is a growing sense of pride and affinity associated with this localised variety of English(...)often a tendency among speakers of ME to exaggerate the Malaysian accent in casual interactions(...)to assert their identity and project a sense of shared membership in a local speech community(...)colloquial ME is often the preferred

choice, as a sign of solidarity and camaraderie, even for speakers who are highly proficient in standard English" (Rajadurai, 2004:54).

Habibah (2000) noted that the attempt to adopt a "native-speaker", foreign (e.g. British or American) accent is usually rejected as "put on" (Halimah, 2000:57-58). An interview conducted by Schneider (2003) with a group of Malaysian students showed that a "good accent," that is, the British or American accents, is a goal worth striving for and displays a deeply entrenched exonormative orientation (Schneider, 2003:60-62). This shows that while the mesolectal Malaysian English is the preferred medium of communication socially, most Malaysians strive to use the acrolectal Malaysian English to show themselves as more "adept" in the eyes of the public.

That being said, they however rejected the binarism implied in a statement like "Malay and English are both essential in nation-building" (Asmah, 2000:20), and also the exclusive focus of Malaysia's language policy upon these two languages. In contrast, particularly students of non-Malay descent said that they would like to see their own ethnic native languages recognised more generally as important elements of the country's heritage and reality.

Malaysian English has gone through the process of structural nativisation on all levels of language organisation. Phonological features include vowel mergers, accent shifts; e.g., *academic* [ˌækəˈdɛmɪk] to [əˈkædemɪk], *competence* [ˈkɒmpɪtəns] to [kɒmˈpɪtəns], etc., suprasegmental feature like intonation and a syllable-timed rhythm, the omission of single coda consonants; e.g. *spea'*(k), *abou'*(t), and final consonant cluster reduction; e.g., *earlies'*(t), *affor'*(d).[5] Many of the grammatical innovations are attested at the interface of lexis and syntax.

For instance, Newbrook noted, "Many of these features(...)involve the selection of complement structures (*to*-infinitive, *-ing* participle) following particular verbs, adjectives, etc.. the use of phrases where clauses would be usual in other varieties" (Newbrook, 1997:244).

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[5] See Baskaran (2004, 2005); Zuraidah (2000), and Schneider (2003b) for more information.

Further examples such as:

a) Missing concord in noun phrases (e.g. *This two languages, many works, much...resources*)
b) Missing articles (e.g. *I was educated at Ø University of Malaya*)
c) Progressive use of stative verbs (e.g. *She is owning...; I am smelling..*)
d) Pluralisation of mass nouns (e.g. *staffs, accommodations*)[6]

Baskaran (2004) noted that the local vocabulary has incorporated borrowings from indigenous languages, in his later research in 2005 stating that it is the influence from *Bahasa Malaysia* into English. This includes culturally distinctive terms (e.g., *tudung* (headscarf), *kampong* (village), *sawi* (mustard), *bomoh* (shaman), and *penghulu*(village chief)), words for different kinds of ethnic food (e.g., *sambal*, *kacang*, *mee*), hybrid local compounds (e.g. *meranti* wood, *syariah* court, and *nobat* drums), coinages (e.g., *Datukship*), semantic shifts (e.g., cut), and local collocations (e.g., *open light/socks/tap/hooks* instead of *turn on the light/ take off the socks/ turn off the tap/undo the hooks*).

Lowenberg (1991) shows that the Malaysian policy of English grows upon what he names as "banner words," terms that are filled with political and cultural significance in public discourse (e.g., *gotong-royong* (an activity done by the community for the community, normally associated with cleaning)*, adat* (rituals)*, bumiputra* (original people of the land)*, and *rakyat* (citizens)). Another feature of nativisation is seen when the idea of *code-switching* and *code-mixing* is in the communicative register, assuming the role of an identity register in addition to replacing Malay and/or mesolectal English in a social function. This code-switching and code-mixing is what Malaysians term as *Manglish*, or in formal terms, the Colloquial Malaysian English (CMalE).

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[6] See Platt, Weber and Ho (1983), Newbrook (1997), Morais (2000, 2001), Nair-Venugopal (2000), Gill (2002)

2.5 Colloquial Malaysian English (CMalE)

It is a well-known fact that Malaysia is a wealthy country culturally as well as linguistically; hence the need for the prior explanation regarding the demographics, the culture of the country and the historical viewpoint of English in the country as well as the usage of Malaysian English, which again, refers to an umbrella term of all the varieties of English spoken in Malaysia is before explaining the phenomenon that is Colloquial Malaysian English (CMalE).

The richness in the linguistic aspect is made clearer with a definition by Rajadurai (2004) stated that this "linguistic tapestry" comes from the mingling of the ethnic communities; for example, the Indian (mainly Tamil-speaking), Arabic and Chinese merchants and workers who immigrated into Malaysia before the European traders discovered this land for its wealth and its strategic positioning for commerce (Rajadurai, 2004:54). At that time, education was not an important element in business dealings, therefore languages were learnt through hearing and continual trial-and-error daily communications.

Hence, when the British era happened, the aforementioned "linguistic tapestry" system was still in use, but the people added English into the mix, which then became a norm to communicate among themselves during that era. This "language" is then taught informally (that is, through observation and assimilation) from generation to generation and is now known as the basilectal Malaysian English, or CMalE. Baskaran (1987) stated that the basilect is only intelligible among speakers who can communicate at this level due to the deviation in phonology, syntax, and lexis.

Before presenting examples to statements being spoken in CMalE, it is noteworthy to say that CMalE is a colloquial language with a system of its own. Albeit being colloquial, one cannot nonchalantly use words that are utilised in CMalE in whichever part of an utterance as they would please. One can see the system of CMalE in function in the following uses[7] in the next page:

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[7] Information extracted from Pillai (2012). See Pillai S. (2012). Colloquial Malaysian English. In B. Kortmann & K. Lunkenheimer (Eds.), The Mouton World Atlas of Variation in English. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.

a) **Pronouns**

The tendency of dropping the subject pronouns for referential pronouns (e.g. I, you) and for dummy pronouns occurs a lot in CMalE. For example:

(You) *Never do anything right!*[8]

(You) *Always also cannot, cannot, cannot..* (You always prohibit (me) from doing something)

b) **Noun phrases.**

Speakers of CMalE tend to use the plural form for uncountable nouns, such as *staffs*, *equipments*, *informations*, *criterias,* and *phenomenons*. Also, the lack of articles where there should be in their speech:

Talk like (a) *pretentious person...*

(A)*New girl, is it*? (Pillai, 2012:575)

Where is (the) *form for* (this) *application?*

Such usages sometimes find its way into the written form, which then suggests that the users are not aware of the proper manner of such forms or there are no distinction between colloquial and standard use of these forms (Pillai, 2008).

Among the forms found in formal situations are seen in this excerpt from a Malaysian English newspaper highlighted by Lim (2001:128):

The business community can supplement and complement Governments' efforts to combat social problems among youths.

In this example, the article "the" is missing from the statement.

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[8] Examples were derived from my own usage and from Pillai (2012), Baskaran (2005), PIllai (2006), Sim (1993) and Wu (2003).

c) **Verb phrases.**

Pillai (2012) noted that the "levelling of tense and aspect is prevalent in both colloquial varieties. This includes using the simple past form for StE present perfect with a preference for lexical marking of time and aspect with words like *already*." For instance:

- *I shower already.*
- *You eat already or not?*

Among less profecient speakers, one can note the use of the present perfect tense for simple past tense in the Standard English:

- *We been to the cinema last night.*
- *I gone to the shop.*

Less profecient speakers also have the tendency to omit the past tense form of regular verbs:

- *He eat here yesterday.* (Alsagoff, 2001:80).
- *She go to the shop yesterday.*

This feature is often attributed to first-language influences such as from Malay and Chinese (Alsagoff, 2001, Baskaran, 2005). The Chinese languages do not mark the verb for tense. Temporal information is obtained from context or from the use of temporal markers like *today*, *everyday*, *yesterday* (Baskaran, 2005). Pillai (2012) illustrated the point by comparing the language to Malay, Cantonese, and Mandarin as shown below:

Malay: *Saya   datang sini   setiap hari.*

       I come   here   every day.

Canton: *Ngoh mooi yat   dou   lei   ni do.*

Manda: *Wo   mei tian   dou   lai   zhe li.*

      I   everyday   also   come here

        'I come here every day.'

Malay: *Saya datang sini semalam.*

       I   come here yesterday.

Canto: *Ngoh   kam yât   lei   ni do.*

Manda: *Wa   zuo tian   lai   zhe li*

       I   yesterday   come   here.

        'I came here yesterday.

Pillai also noted that the influence of substrate languages do not account for patterns of use in the nativised varieties of Malaysian English (Pillai, 2012:576). Ho, using the colloquial version of the Singaporean English (SgE), suggests that there is a particular pattern of use related to the lack of past tense marking in colloquial SgE such as the use of adverbs of frequency and "non-punctual verbs" which refer "to an action that takes place over a period of time or to a habitual activity" (Ho, 2003:40-46).

d) **Negation**

Malaysians who speak the CMalE variation of English have a tendency to use invariant tags in the form of "isn't it?" or "can or not?" in their sentences. Wee (2008) notes that the *can or not* tag denotes possibility and permission (Wee, 2008:599), while Pillai states that the main effect of the *isn't it* tag is to seek agreement from the interlocutor and therefore, the tag does not need agree with the verb in the main clause for type, tense and number (e.g. *They are driving, isn't it?*; *The concert started late, isn't it?*) (Pillai, 2012:576). Examples are as follows:

- *You don't drive much, isn't it?* (You don't drive much, do you?)
- *You slow down a bit, can or not?* (Can you slow down a little?)
- *Take more, you like it, isn't it?* (Help yourself with more; you like it, don't you?)

e) **Agreement**

CMalE includes zero marking for 3rd person singular resulting in the use of the invariant present tense form, and again, such features are likely to be more prevalent among speakers with lower proficiency in English (Pillai, 2012:576). For instance:

- *He come here yesterday.* (He came here yesterday)
- *We not yet go for class.* (We have not gone to class yet [but we will].)

- *You got see doctor*? (Did you see the doctor?)

The lack of number agreement also applies to singular subjects on this variety of English:

- *He don't like to go to school one.* (He doesn't like to go to school.)
- *She sing everyday when she shower.* (She sings everyday when she takes a shower.)
- *My mom do things by herself. No need anyone help.* (My mother does things by herself. She does not need anybody's help at all.)

There are also deletions of copula *be* in the following contexts:

- Progressives:
  I expecting him to come and pick me up. (I am expecting him to come and pick me up.)
- Noun:
  I want that one. This one not bad also. (I would like this _____ (can refer to anything). This is not too bad as well.)
- Adjectives:
  You damn bad. (You are a very bad person.)
  This thing useless one. (This thing is useless.)

f) **Discourse organization and word order**

In CMalE, there are no inversions or auxiliaries in *wh-* questions and in main clause *yes/no* questions. Examples are:

- *Tomorrow you want to come or not?* (Do you want to come along tomorrow?)
- *You take this for me can?* (Can you take this for me?)
- *Your mother leh*? (Where is your mother?)
- *What she doing?* (What is she doing?)

As mentioned earlier, the invariant tag *is it/isn't it* or *can or not* or *or not* are generally employed in the interrogative form in general discourse:

- *She likes to dance, isn't it?* (She likes to dance, doesn't she?)
- *You can or not one?* (Can you do this at all?)

- *You free or not?* (Are you free?)
- *Is it?* (Really?)

g) Reduplication of words

Malaysians have a tendency to reduplicate words in English due to the fact that it is a norm in the Malay, Tamil and the Chinese language. It is used in both languages for different reasons, such as pluralisation, emphasis, enumeration, and repetition of actions; among many others. However, the habit of reduplicating words have since been translated into English in Malaysia; more specifically in CMalE, and normally used to emphasize a matter (or a noun) and to represent pluralisation of things. Examples are:

- *You don't noisy-noisy ah, I whack you later then you know.* (Don't be too noisy or I'll discipline you later.)
- *That boy you dated is the short-short one in the party is it?* (Was the boy you dated the short one which we met at the party?)
- *Ai yah, don't play-play lah, he where got will die wan...* (Don't joke around; he won't die!)

Besides these differences stated above, CMalE contains colloquial words (or *slangs*) which are used in specific moments when an utterance is said to add emphasis to a statement. These slang words are also used to lessen the level of formality in a situation, and to encourage a more open enviornment for communication. Below are some common words used in Manglish and explanations on the way they are used:

- *-Lah*

  The *–lah* is used normally at the end of a statement; however it can be used also in the beginning of a sentence. The manner in which it is used as well as the tone employed when it is spoken can reflect a different meaning to an utterance. This is a universal expression in Malaysia, although the *-lah* comes from the Chinese language (啦, read as *la*) to emphasize statements in different situations. Examples are such as:

  o To show confidence:

  No problem lah, can one! (There's no problem with this, we can do it!)

  Eh, she really very good lah! (She is really good in this!)

  o To plead/appease a person:

Please lah, don't like that lah...(Please help me, don't be mean)

Sorry lah, forgive me please? (I'm sorry, please forgive me)

- To reflect anger:

Go away lah you! (Go away)

You damn crappy lah, don't fake lah. (You are a horrible person, don't pretend anymore)

- *–Mah*

The *–mah* is used especially among the Chinese, as this comes from the Chinese language as well. There are two ways to use the *–mah*; to ask questions (吗, read as *ma*) and to emphasize on a statement (嘛, also read as *ma* but in a different tone.) In the first *–mah* usage, examples are as follows:

- *You got come tomorrow mah?*(Will you come tomorrow?)

Can mah this? (Is this a good choice?/Will this work?)

A variation of the *–mah* interrogative is *–meh*, (from the Chinese interrogative emphasizer 么, read as /mɛ/, with the *e* sound in *when*)

- *Yeah meh? You don't stupid.* (Really? Don't be stupid)

Can meh this? (Will this work?)

Got meh? (Usually used as a question to reflect disbelief in an action)

The other manner of using the *–mah*, which is to place emphasis, is normally used to further emphatically emphasize a statement:

- *Her mother always scold her one mah!* (Her mother always scolds her!)

It's that shirt mah, not this one! (It is that shirt, not this one!)

Your brother said one mah, he won't send me to airport. (Your brother was the one who said he would not send me to the airport).

- *-Lor*

The *-lor*, taken from the Chinese 咯 (read as *lo*) is used normally to make a statement. It could be used in a huge spectrum of tones; namely in nonchalance, anger, agreement and also sarcasm. For example:

- (angry) *Everything also you say lor!* (You have all the say, and I don't!)

- o (sarcastic) *You very clever, you do lor...* (If you have all the smarts then you do it)
- o (nonchalance) *Whatever she say lor, I don't care wan..* (I don't care, whatever she says goes)
- o (agreement) *Ya lor! That was what happened!* (Yes, that was exactly what happened!)

- *Kan*

  Kan is taken from the Malay word, *kan,* which is used interrogatively (there are other usages of the *kan* word, such as its utilisation as a suffix in a word, but in this case the focus is on the interrogative usage of the word). Malaysians use this word in the CMalE interrogatively as well as a part of the identity of the language. Examples are:
  - o *She didn't come yesterday kan?*
  - o *Eh, that aunty is super mean, kan?*

- *Got*

  The usage of *got* in the Standard English is very limited; that is, only as a past tense of the word "get". In CMalE, the word *got* is commonly used as a replacement for *have*:
  - o *She got class meh?* (Does she have class?)
  - o *You got stock or not?* (Do you have anymore material stored?)
  - o *Dad got no time lah.* (Dad does not have time.)

  The common expression/question "*where got?*" is also used in CMalE, which can be loosely translated to "where have". When one asks this question, it depends on the situation for its interpretation:
  - o *I where got kick your cat*? (When have I kicked your cat?)
  - o *You know where got the software or not?* (Do you know where the software is sold?

- *Want/One (wan)*

The expression *wan* or *want/one* is very commonly used for the less proficient speakers of English in Malaysia and is normally placed at the end of a sentence. There are a few ways to use this expression: to say/ask if someone wants something, to denote possession and also as an emphasis to a statement or item in a phrase, similar to the Mandarin Chinese's *de* (的).:

  o *You wan this?* (Do you want this?)
  o *This wan lah, he say the board black colour mah!* (It's this [emphasis on *this*] item, the one which he said the board was black in colour.)
  o *This wan your wan or my wan?* (Is this yours or mine?)

- *Macha*

The word *macha* in the Tamil language refers to someone who is a brother-in-law. However in the Malaysian context, *macha* simply refers to an Indian male person when someone greets him in a friendly manner, or when someone refers to himself being an Indian.

  o *Eh, macha! How are you lah? Long time no hear!* (Hey friend! How are you? I have not heard from you in a long time!)
  o *I'm a blood-red macha lah, bro.* (I am a blood-red Indian man, *man*.)

- *Neh* (there)

The word *neh* is used in CMalE instead of "there" to point at something. It can also be used in questions as well when one is referring to something abstract. Examples are as follows:

  o *Neh, that boy always shout at her wan lor!* (There, that's the boy who always shouts at her!)
  o *Neh, that day you talk about it wan ah... you remember or not?* (It was something you talked about it the other day... don't you remember?)

- *Terror*

    The word *terror* in the Standard English means "horror"; but in the CMalE version, *terror* means "awesome", "amazing" or "super". Examples of usage are:

    o *Wahlau, you damn terror lah. Like this also can!* (Wow, you're amazing. Only you can do it that way!)

    o *Her maths super terror wan, so difficult also she can do.* (She is great with Mathematics; she can solve even the hardest questions.)

Visitors who make their way to Malaysia would notice that this [that is, CMalE being spoken] is the norm in the country and that it probably is not as understandable to non-Malaysians. The base of CMalE is English, but to a non-Malaysian, the English spoken would not be as comprehensible as when someone speaks the Standard English to him or her. Sometimes, the statements could sound rude to a non-Malaysian as well.

Here are some examples of the usage of Manglish in different social settings compared to their Standard English equivalents:

<u>Among Friends</u>

A: Eh bro, can give me three ringgit or not ah? *Boh lui lah* now. (*Could you please lend me three ringgits? I currently have no money with me.*)

B: Dei macha you ask money from me I where got la? My mother control, man! (*I do not have the money that you're asking for; my mother controls my sp;ending.*)

C. *Ala bang*, you're a good man. Don't worry lah, sure you success wan! (*Hey man, you're a good man. Don't worry, it'd be fine!)*

<u>In a shop</u>

A: Hello aunty! This shirt got L size ah? (*Excuse me; do you have the L size for this shirt?*)

B: No wor. No stock liao. If you want then you wait until stock come lah. (*No, currently there are none left. Do you mind waiting until the newer stocks arrive?*)

In a *mamak* (A Malaysian-Indian restaurant)

A: Eh boss, teh tarik satu! (A *teh tarik* [typical Malaysian milk tea] *please?*)

B: OK boss, coming soon! (*Coming right up!*)

As one would be able to see, the jargons that are used in the CMalE version of the sentences that one cannot explain using the Standard English. This usage is the basilect version of CMalE, unique to only Malaysians as the mixture of languages in the local English could be understood only by the interlocutors, that is, Malaysians. For instance, as seen in the examples on the previous page, *bro* (short form for "brother") is used very casually to refer to a friend, usually a male friend and not a literal brother. However, this word is also used among ladies, but very rarely so and hence confusing the non-users of the language.

One could also note that the familial greeting, *aunty*, is employed in the example. In Malaysia, the reference to an older person, regardless of whether that person is a family member or not, is "*aunty*" or "*uncle*". The phenomenon of 'uncle' and 'aunty' in Malaysia could possibly begin with the Chinese culture, where the younger generation would greet the older as *shu-shu* (uncle), or *shen-shen* (aunty), regardless of whom the person is. The Malaysian culture is such that words that are usually used in the familial context are used anywhere to bring in the sense of "closeness" among the interlocutors in a particular setting. Also, looking at the fact that the Malaysian culture is one that places high importance on status, it is very important to greet an older person by their titles, and therefore used in the society to show respect to the older generations. .

Based on the same idea, one will hear the term *bang* (refer to example 1.C) or *kak* very often especially among Malay speakers or non-Malay speakers referring to their Malay interlocutors. *Bang* stands for *abang*, which means "older brother" in Malay, and is often used in spoken communication in a group where there is an older male person to show respect to him. In the same way, *kak* is for *kakak*, which means "older sister", and is used to refer to an older woman with respect.

It is noteworthy to state that in the second example, a non-Malaysian might find it rude to hear a shopkeeper say "*if you want you wait until the stock come lah."* This is because the tone used when the statement is said would most likely be nonchalant and hence, sounding rather "hostile." However, this manner of expression is rather common as Malaysians are rather nonchalant in nature. The mix of different languages in the English language can also be seen in the last example, where the customer says, '*teh tarik satu*,' which means a cup of *teh tarik* (a typical Malaysian milk tea) in Malay. Then, the waiter replies in a somewhat broken English by saying, "coming soon," referring to the phrase always seen in the promotional posters for movies that are coming up, but in fact, he was only saying that the customer will receive what he ordered very quickly.

Another point worth making regarding the basilect use of CMalE is that the user would choose his/her words according to the environment he/she is in. It depends on the races that are involved among the communicators at the moment, but if the interlocutors are multilingual, then the choice of words used during the communication would be multilingual. For instance, in the first example (among friends), A, B, and C would most likely be from different races as the choice of words used during their communication are a mix of different languages. Then, in the example of the situation in the shop, the jargon used is mostly of the Chinese language, therefore one can make a conclusion that one or both of the interlocutors are Chinese in the conversation.

In the next pages, as an example to how Malaysians communicate, a humorous article comparing between communications made in British English (i.e. the standard English) and CMalE is included. This article was circulated via e-mail many years ago among Malaysians and it reflects a clearer picture of how Malaysians generally communicate using CMalE. The writer of the e-mail is unknown.

Who says our English is *teruk* (bad)? Just see below -

Ours is simple, short, concise, straight-to-point, effective etc:

WHEN GIVING A CUSTOMER BAD NEWS

Britons: I'm sorry, Sir, but we don't seem to have the sweater you want in your size, but if you give me a moment, I can call the other outlets for you.

Malaysians: No Stock.

RETURNING A CALL

Britons: Hello, this is John Smith. Did anyone page for me a few moments ago?

Malaysians: Hello, who page?

ASKING SOMEONE TO MAKE WAY

Britons: Excuse me, I'd like to get by. Would you please make way?

Malaysians: S-kew me

WHEN SOMEONE OFFERS TO PAY

Britons: Hey, put your wallet away, this drink is on me.

Malaysians:No-need, lah.

WHEN ASKING FOR PERMISSION

Britons: Excuse me, but do you think it would be possible for me to enter through this door?

Malaysians: (pointing the door) can ar?

WHEN ENTERTAINING

Britons: Please make yourself right at home.

Malaysians: Don't be shy, lah!

WHEN DOUBTING SOMEONE

Britons: I don't recall you giving me the money.

Malaysians: Where got?

WHEN DECLINING AN OFFER

Britons: I'd prefer not to do that, if you don't mind.

Malaysians: Don't want la…

IN DISAGREEING ON A TOPIC OF DISCUSSION

Britons: Err. Tom, I have to stop you there. I understand where you're coming from, but I really have to disagree with what you said about the issue.

Malaysians: You mad, ah?

WHEN ASKING SOMEONE TO LOWER THEIR VOICE

Britons: Excuse me, but could you please lower your voice, I'm trying to concentrate over here.

Malaysians: Shut up lah!

WHEN ASKING SOMEONE IF HE/SHE KNOWS YOU

Britons: Excuse me, but I noticed you staring at me for some time.. Do I know you?

Malaysians: See what, see what?

WHEN ASSESSING A TIGHT SITUATION

Britons: We seem to be in a bit of a predicament at the moment.

Malaysians: Die-lah!!

WHEN TRYING TO FIND OUT WHAT HAD HAPPENED

Britons: Will someone tell me what has just happened?

Malaysians: What happen, why like that….

WHEN SOME ONE DID SOMETHING WRONG

Britons: This isn't the way to do it, here let me show you.

Malaysians: Like that also don't know how to do!!!!

WHEN ONE IS ANGRY

Britons: Would you mind not disturbing me?

Malaysians: *Celaka* (Damn) you!

IN PARLIAMENT, THE QUESTION ON "BOCOR"

Briton: Where is the leak? I shall ask the Works Minister to look into it.

Malaysian: STUPID, STUPID, STUPID question. Where got "bocor" ?

2.5.1 East Malaysian CMalE.

The examples given in the previous pages are what would generally be heard in Malaysia, or known as the "standard"[9] version of CMalE. However, it bears mentioning that Malaysia consists also of three states in the East; Sabah, Sarawak, and the Federal Territory of Labuan (an island located near Sabah). Hence, it is also important in this research article to highlight the usage of CMalE in Sabah and Sarawak (the language in Labuan is akin to the Sabahan dialect, therefore it shall not be highlighted in this study), and the differences that distinguish them from

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[9] "Standard" is used in this statement because if an East Malaysian had to speak CMalE to a non-East Malaysian, he has to revert to the CMalE which is commonly used. The East Malaysian CMalE is very particular and only the people who hail from these areas would understand what is being transmitted in a communication when spoken.

the standard CMalE. Such inclusion in this research article is knowledge from the writer's personal experience as a Malaysian as well as informal questions asked to the writer's friends who were born and raised in those areas as there are very few research resources regarding this matter.

Sabahans and Sarawakians have a distinguished manner of speech; thus setting them apart from the rest of the Malaysians. The differences that single their version of CMalE out from the standard CMalE are based on their tone and the adaptation of their state's Malay as well as their indigenous languages' jargons into their CMalE speeches. Due to the fact that both states are the states in which the indigenous races of Malaysia are mostly concentrated, there are many elements from the indigenous languages being assimilated into their spoken language, and therefore creating a unique *potpourri* that is a different version from that of the standard CMalE.

One good example of a term which sets an East Malaysian apart would be the emphasizer "*bah*". What is even more unique would be that the usage of "*bah*" in their respective contexts and how it is pronounced would set a Sabahan and a Sarawakian apart from each other. There will be an explanation on the different contexts of how the Sabahan *bah* and the Sarawakian *bah* are used.

The Sabahan *bah* is used for:-

- Emphasis

  The *bah* usage is dependent on the context as it varies one from the other. One of the most common manners of using the *bah* is for emphasis in a statement; whether to deny, to respond, to express emotions, etc.. Examples are:-
  - *Stupid bah you!* (You're so stupid)
  - *Can bah if you.* (A common, literally translated response from the Sabahan colloquial Malay language to say yes to a request).
  - *This one bah!* (It's this one)
  - *Not me bah!* (It wasn't me!)
  - *Hungry bah.* (I'm hungry)

- Question.

    Bah is also used in questions, such as:

    - *Why bah you this?* (Why do you behave like this?)
    - *When bah the event starts?/Bah, when does the event start?* (When does the event begin?)
    - *Who bah kasih my car dirty this?* (Who is it that made my car dirty? – *kasih* or *kasi* is a colloquial Malay term used in Malaysia, especially among the Chinese race, which means "to cause".)

- Agreement.

    Bah is used also to agree; alike saying "alright", but to Sabahans, it is a stronger emphasis compared to saying "yes", also normally used to answer a yes/no question:

    - *You better come to the dinner okay?*

        -Bah; okay, okay. (Alright, got it)

- Fact-stating (in a matter-of-factly tone).

    Bah can also be used to state facts:

    - *Stupid bah you.* (You're stupid)
    - *I bah this*. ("It's me you're talking about"; also a common manner literally translated from Malay to English to express confidence.)
    - *Because of GST bah that price hike*. (The price hike is caused by the GST [Goods and Services Tax recently implemented in Malaysia]).

- To express pleasure (eg. Pleasant surprises/ receiving gifts)

    - *Bah... you did this for me?* (Wow, you did this for me?)
    - *Bah... thank you bro!* (Wow, thanks bro!)

- To point in a certain direction:

    - *Tuuu na bah!* (Right there! – the Sabahan's way of pointing direction is normally through pursing their lips in certain direction and saying "*tu na*"; *tu* for "*situ*" which means "there" in English; *na* could be an emphasis filler; like *lah*, and *bah* as the ending emphasizer. The Sabahan's way of measuring distance also depends on the length of the way they say "*tu*"; the longer it is, the further it will be.)

Bah in the Sabahan context can be placed in front or at the end of a statement, depending on how a statement is being said and what is being emphasized in the statement. Among the Sabahans, the usage of *bah* is stronger than the *lah* in terms of its emphasis, and while the *lah* is only used at the end of each statement, the *bah* can be used in a more flexible manner; however there are rules which one applies while using it in a statement. Also, the Sabahan *bah* is also applied for further emphasis, even when *lah* is used; for instance,

- *Like this lah bah... not like that!* (Do it this way, not that way!)

Or even, to soften a statement (again, as an emphasis but to a more persuasive note) by using both together:

- *Don't lah bah get angry..* (Don't get angry)

The usage of *bah* among Sabahans is so unique that only they know how to use that word in the correct context. Most West Malaysians try and end up with the Sabahans negating the usage of the word; most of the time laughing at the attempt. This is also the reason why the Sabahan version of the CMalE is so different from the standard version of CMalE, with the Sabahans using the standard CMalE in the company of West Malaysians or non-Sabahans in general, and only the Sabahan CMalE amongst themselves.

In the Sarawakian version of the *bah*, we will see that it is alike the *lah*, but again, like the Sabahan *bah*, it holds a stronger emphasis to the Sarawakian speaker. It is also placed at the end of a statement like the *lah*, and to add on further emphasis, a Sarawakian can use both at the same time. The Sarawakian version of the CMalE is mostly a literal translation of the indigenous languages of the area; the tribal languages of the tribes existing in Sarawak such as the Ibans and the Bidayuhs, as well as the regional Malay of Sarawak.

The Sarawakian *bah* is used for:-

- Emphasis
  - *Don't do this bah!* (Don't do this)
  - *That's wrong bah.* (That is incorrect)
  - *True bah!* (That's true!)

- Questions
    - *Why you like this bah?* (Why did you behave that way?)
    - *Why dowan to see lah bah?* (Why don't you want to see it?)
    - *Why you so paloi bah?* (Why are you so silly?)
- Making a statement
    - *I short bah.* (I'm short)
    - *Einstein bah.* (It's Einstein)
    - *The tanduk is in the house bah.* (The horn is in the house).

As observed, there are usages of foreign words in the examples. *Paloi* is a word used in the Iban language, the Bidayuh (spelt as *paroi*), as well as the Sarawakian Malay, which means 'silly' or 'stupid'. We can also observe the pattern of the sentence in "Why you so paloi bah" as a direct adaptation from the mother tongue of the region:

Iban   *nama hal nuan paloi bah?*

English   why   you (so) *paloi bah?*

Bidayuh *mani   ku'u paroi bah?*

This goes to show that the adaptation of the indigenous languages are shown in the usage of the Sarawakian version of the CMalE.

East Malaysians, like the West Malaysians, as per the observations made in the examples, have a tendency to adopt words from their languages into their versions of the CMalE. This is seen in the example where one said "*I bah this*", "*not me bah*", and "*hungry bah*" in the Sabahan version of the CMalE and "*I short bah*" in the Sarawakian version. Both are direct translations from the Malay language (see next page):

Sabahan Malay *Aku bah ini*

English   I   *bah*   this

Sabahan Malay *Bukan aku bah*[10]

English   Not   me   *bah*

Sarawak Malay *Aku pendek bah.*

English   I   short   *bah*.

One of the common words used in both regions is *you this* (pronounced as *you dis* –a 'd' sound instead of 'th') as a direct translation of *kau ini* in Malay (normally shortened to *kau ni*), or *kau tok* in Sarawakian Malay. It's normally used as a rebuke or to blame a person, and is placed after the *bah* usage most of the time. Again, it is mostly used in the form of direct adaptation from the Malay language. For instance:

Why bah you dis? (Why do behave this way?)

SarawakianMalay: *Kenapa bah kau ni/tok?*

Sarawakian English: Why   bah   you   this

Bodoh (Malay for 'stupid'; standard Malay pronunciation: [bodo] or [bodoh]; in the Sabahan Malay pronunciation it is pronounced as [bʊdʊ]) *bah you dis.* (You're so stupid)

Sarawakian Malay: Bodoh bah kau ni/tok

Sarawakian English: *Bodoh bah* you this.

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[10] For this statement it is both used in Sabah and Sarawak, though for this study this example is used for the Sabahan language due to an example taken from a YouTube video about Sabahans [refer to "How to Use Bah?" by Adam Tambk].

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3. Research Questions.

In this chapter, we will see the research questions used for the study to prove the hypothesis made as presented in Chapter 1, which is if a Malaysian English speaker with at least an average proficiency of English could switch between CMalE and the standard version of English easily, CMalE is not a problem, but is a cool phenomenon amongst Malaysians which sets them apart from the rest of the English speakers in the world. Then, we will also see the justifications to the design of the research questions for the present study.

3.1 Research Questions and Survey Questions.

The research questions designed for this study are as follows:

a) Is CMalE a problem or a cool phenomenon? Why?
b) Why is the word "cool" used?
c) If CMalE is not a problem, what then, is the real issue in this matter?

To answer these questions, a set of survey questions are created. The survey questions designed for the study are classified in two parts: Part I and Part II.

Part I
1) Introduce yourself and tell us about you. Where are you from, etc..
2) How would you consider the level of your English proficiency? (high, average, low)
3) Would you consider CMalE (or *Manglish*) a "cool" phenomenon or do you think of it as a problem in Malaysia? Why?

Part II
4) How would you order food in a restaurant in colloquial Malaysian English and the standard version of English?
5) How would you inquire about the availability of a material (stock) in a shop in colloquial Malaysian English and the standard version of English?
6) How would you invite your friend to hang out in colloquial Malaysian English and the standard version of English?
7) How would you persuade your friend to help you out in something in colloquial Malaysian English and the standard version of English?

8) How would you reprimand a co-worker/friend/colleague when they have made a mistake in colloquial Malaysian English and the standard version of English?

9) How would you request for the check in colloquial Malaysian English and the standard version of English?

3.2 <u>Justification of Research and Survey Questions</u>

The research questions were designed to prove the hypothesis made in the Introduction chapter. The questions are mainly to see if CMalE is really an issue, why the word "cool" instead of many other words is the word of choice for this study, and should CMalE prove not to be a problem for the Malaysians, it is also important to find out what is the real issue in this debate, hence the questions designed for this study.It is important to ask these questions because the answers would reflect the relevance of the study as well as thoughts and suggestions for future research.

The survey questions are derived from the research questions to facilitate answering them. The questions designed consists of 9 questions broken into two parts: Part I and Part II.

In Part I, the questions were asked to see the respondents' considerations regarding their perception on CMalE, their perception on their level of English proficiency as well as to see where they come from; if they are from the city or the rural areas; and if they lived in rural areas, to see if they work in the city currently. In city areas, it is very important to possess at least an average level of English proficiency to be able to get by because English is a language which is constantly used in the city daily.

The introduction about themselves is also a preliminary method to see the respondents' English proficiency. By hearing them in the recording, one can hear clearly the pronunciation (not the accent; but rather the pronunciation) of the respondent—if it is clear, understandable, and precise. Through the introduction itself, one can also hear the Malaysian intonation; which is influenced greatly by the Asian languages such as Malay and Chinese which causes a monotony in the Malaysian English enunciations. This does not mean that the English that is spoken is not of the standard level; it only means that there is a lack of stress in the tone of the language.

In short, the introduction serves as a gauge as well as a quick introduction for non-Malaysians to Malaysian English.

In Part II, the questions designed are very direct and simple in order to test the speed of the speaker between the two varieties of English in Malaysia; the CMalE and the standard version of English. Ideally, the respondent should be able to switch between the two varieties without a struggle if he or she is an average English speaker as the questions are based on daily situations. However, due to the fact that most Malaysians are used to using the CMalE, there might be situations where the respondent would find themselves pausing to look for the correct terminology in the standard version of English.

4. <u>Methodology</u>
4.1 <u>Context</u>

The experimental design which is used for this study is a qualitative case study. This section describes the methodological reasons of conducting the study, and justifies the choice of ten case studies as the research method for this present work.

The hypothesis given for this research article is that if a Malaysian English speaker with average proficiency of English could switch between CMalE and the standard version of English easily, CMalE is not a problem to the Malaysian society, but is a cool phenomenon amongst Malaysians which sets them apart from the rest of the English speakers in the world. Most Malaysians, especially those who live in the city areas in states such as Kuala Lumpur, Selangor, Ipoh, Penang, Malacca, Johor Bahru, Kota Kinabalu, and Kuching are average to proficient English speakers, therefore switching between the two varieties would not be a problem as the English language is one that they have to use daily. Hence, this factor makes CMalE a cool phenomenon in Malaysia as a language that marks the identity of Malaysians, proving the statement of this research article.

Hence, the method of conducting the research is best done through voice recording between the interviewer and their respondents, simply because a non-Malaysian can hear the difference between the CMalE and the Standard English used in Malaysia as well as the speed between the switches. The written survey would only give the respondent time to think and write

the "correct" answer, while a recorded one would give a more "natural" vibe to the interview, in which the results will be seen easily.

The interview is conducted through personal encounters, as well as through Skype conversations. The interviews are recorded using a voice recording application in the mobile phone. The questions asked during the interview are based on six daily situations that a Malaysian would almost always face and the respondents are required to respond in CMalE and afterwards, in Standard English.

The questions are divided into two parts: the first as an introduction, consisting of where the respondent is from, how they would consider their English proficiency level, and if they considered CMalE as a "cool" phenomenon (that is, as an identity marker as well as a unique form of language) or if they thought it was a problem to Malaysian English speakers. The second part was the situational questions as stated above.

The hypothesis would be proven by deciding on the speed of the switch and the accuracy of the respondents' answers in the standard English version. This research method (that is, recording of the respondents' answers) helps to prove or disprove the hypothesis. If the majority of the respondents are able to switch quickly and accurately between the two versions, this goes to show that CMalE is not a problem in Malaysia, instead is an identity-marking language which is a unique phenomenon in the country.

Using the voice recording method assures the reliability of the results of the research. This method helps to show further impartiality in the process of doing the research as the listener could gauge based on "live" recordings of the interview. Through hearing the respondents' answers, one can deduce on whether the CMalE in Malaysia "butchers" the English language in the country or it is just again, an identity marker for the citizens of Malaysia. Also, a more accurate gauge on speed in exchanging between the two versions of English would be obtained through listening to the recordings, therefore making this method a reliable method of obtaining the results for this study.

The results would be kept in a Compact Disc (CD), and discussed in the "Discussion" chapter of this study. The writer of the research would explain different salient characteristics in the interviews which highlight different Malaysian elements; such as variations in speed in the

switching process and manners of speech. In this way, data analysis in the written form would be more tangible and further explanations can be given in situations that vary from the norms as per explained in the previous chapters.

In summary, to ensure reliability, accuracy and impartiality for this study, the recording method is used to conduct this research. This method would also enable non-Malaysians to have a good overview of the culture and language in Malaysia as an exposure and for Malaysians to verify the validity of the study itself should the hypothesis be proven (as Malaysians are known to criticize the CMalE version as a problem to Malaysians themselves).

4.2 <u>Participants</u>

The respondents taking part in this experiment are made up of ten people, selected through people who volunteered to respond to the questionnaires to ensure no bias in the research, of both genders and of different races and origins in Malaysia. The respondents are also chosen through referrals – friends of respondents. Therefore, the listener would be able to hear different accents of different cultures and their personal versions of the CMalE. The reason to choosing ten people for this study is because of the similarity between the answers, therefore having ten respondents would already have helped the research to prove its point or otherwise.

The table below and also in the next page is a chart with a brief background of these participants:

Name	Place	Sex	Profession
Aaron Lam	Sabah (Kota Kinabalu)/ Selangor	Male	Graphic Designer
Angeline Lee	Kuala Lumpur	Female	Student
Cuzario David	Kuching/ Kuala Lumpur	Male	Musician

Dom Yeoh	Kuala Lumpur	Male	Hotel Manager
Haire Ibrahim	Kuala Lumpur	Male	Aircraft Engineering Apprentice
Henry Choo	Kuala Lumpur	Male	Student
Ili Fatimah	Nagoya, Japan	Female	Student
Rachel Ong	Malacca/Kuala Lumpur	Female	Student
Stephanie Mah	Hamburg, Germany	Female	Housewife
Lee Tien Yi	Kuala Lumpur	Male	Project Engineer

4.3 Procedures and Data Collection

The study is conducted through a search for respondents among Malaysians via social media; specifically Facebook and WhatsApp. Respondents are volunteers who offered to answer the research questions designed for the research and a specific time is set due to time differences between Spain and Malaysia. Some other respondents are Malaysians living overseas (namely Japan and Germany), but again, due to geographical differences, there is an appointment set between the interviewer and the respondents to hold the interview. During the interview via Skype, the answers are recorded in the aforementioned "Voice Recording" application in the mobile phone for data collection, which then is transferred into the laptop and then stored in a Compact Disc (CD) for data recording.

4.4 Instruments

The main instrument for this study would be the aforementioned designated survey questions and the "Voice Recording" application in most smartphones; and the mobile phone used is the Samsung Galaxy Note 4, which will then be transferred and saved into a CD.

5. Analysis and Discussion.

In this part, we will look at the results of the interviews (refer to CD attached) to prove the hypothesis stated, which is that CMalE would not be a problem, but instead a cool phenomenon if the Malaysian speaker with at least an average level of proficiency in English would not find it a struggle to switch between CMalE and the standard version of English.

It bears reiterating the reason to why this study: the opposing views on whether CMalE is a problem or a cultural identity. The main purpose of this study is to prove that the CMalE is not a problem, but a cool phenomenon amongst Malaysians, but with a condition: the English proficiency of the Malaysians have to be at least of the average level and above. With such proficiency, switching between the two variations of the English language in Malaysia would not be a problem as a Malaysian with at least an average proficiency in English knows the proper grammatical rules to the standard variety of English, proving the hypothesis made.

The survey questions are designed according to daily situations a Malaysian would face and as explained in the Research Questions chapter (Refer Chapter 3), the questions were separated into two parts; the first part for self-introduction, and the second consists of the main research questions of this study. The first part was also to gauge the proficiency of the respondents as they talk about themselves to ensure the reliability of the results of the study. Upon doing this research, more appropriate methods have been discovered to get a better estimation on the respondents' English proficiency, such as a simple proficiency test according to the TOEFL/Cambridge standards; however, due to time constraints, the designated method was used and the proficiencies gauged as per the writer's consideration.

Then, the second part of the questions, which consists of the six main research questions were used as the main focus to prove or disprove the hypothesis of this study. The speed of changing between the standard variety of English to CMalE will help decide if CMalE is indeed,

a problem or if it is just a cool phenomenon. It bears mentioning in this article the common answers to the six research questions in Part II as a reference point, however in the recording there are variations to the given answers:

1) How would you order food in a restaurant in colloquial Malaysian English and the standard version of English?

   -In CMalE: *Boss, order! / Boss, one ___ (name of food) please!*

   -In Standard English: Can I have a _____ (name of food) please?/ I'm ready to have my order taken.

2) How would you inquire about the availability of a material (stock) in a shop in colloquial Malaysian English and the standard version of English?

   -In CMalE: *Eh aunty, this one got ah?/ Got size or not this shirt?*

   -In Standard English: Excuse me, do you have this item available in the store?

3) How would you invite your friend to hang out in colloquial Malaysian English and the standard version of English?

   -In CMalE: *Eh free not? Jom let's go out!*

   -In Standard English: Are you free this afternoon? Do you want to hang out?

4) How would you persuade your friend to help you out in something in colloquial Malaysian English and the standard version of English?

   -In CMalE: *Wei/Eh please lah, help lah.*

   -In Standard English: I really need your help; could you please help me out with this?

5) How would you reprimand a co-worker/friend/colleague when they have made a mistake in colloquial Malaysian English and the standard version of English?

   -In CMalE: *Eh, wrong already lah this, do again!/ Why you so stupid wan? Wrong la!*

   -In Standard English: I think you've done this wrongly; could you redo this?

6) How would you request for the check in colloquial Malaysian English and the standard version of English?

   -In CMalE: *Boss, bill please!* (pronounced as "/plːs/", instead of /pliːz/)

   -In Standard English: Can I have the check/bill please?

For this study, ten respondents were chosen because of the similarity of their answers: not in the choice of words but rather the manner of how they would say something in the CMalE and the standard variety of English. Most respondents are based in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, however, there are two who are living overseas at the time of interview; one in Nagoya, Japan; and the other, in Hamburg, Germany. In the table provided in Chapter 4.2, there are some participants in which two places are included. The first one would be the place of birth, while the second would be the current place/city they are in. Unfortunately, these details were not recorded in the interview recording as the data was obtained after the recording session.

Initially, the idea was to not prompt the respondents to switch between the two varieties as to ensure a more accurate result for the hypothesis stated; however after a few initial takes, there are some prompting needed as some of the respondents did not answer if they were not prompted. Therefore, the research will be proven based on the quickness of response of the respondents to the variety of English when prompted. For example, when the respondents answer first in CMalE, afterwhich the writer will ask "what about in standard English?" or something along those lines to prompt, the quickness and accuracy in response will be what proves or disproves the hypothesis of this study. Sometimes, prompting is not needed as some respondents understand that they need to change between the two varieties from the question given, but most of the time, prompting is necessary.

During the process of the interviews, respondents who possess a high level of proficiency in English and are confident about it had no qualms in answering that their proficiency is high, while the ones who are rather unsure would say "slightly above average" or "medium". Most of the time, the personal considerations of the respondents do accurately reflect their proficiency in English, though both classes of proficiencies could answer very well when asked for their opinions on whether CMalE is a problem or a cool phenomenon with really interesting responses which will be discussed later. When answering the questions in Part II, the respondents with high proficiency in English tend to answer questions in CMalE with more English elements in them as well as more examples while those who possess an average proficiency would struggle to find answers for either variety in some questions (e.g. refer to TFM_Haire and TFM_Tien), and the buffer time between the switch also took slightly longer than those who rated themselves as high in their English proficiency.

The general consensus among the Malaysians was that CMalE is a "cool" phenomenon; some used the word "identity marker", while some said "it is a cultural thing, only available in Malaysia". Some even stated that CMalE is recognisable immediately by the speaker, especially if placed side by side with the close cousin of the variety, the Colloquial Singaporean English (ColSgE). One respondent said that the use of CMalE is the representation of the bond between Malaysians, and that it brings Malaysians closer to each other. However, at the same time, some respondents also said that while it is "cool" amongst Malaysians, it would not be cool for non-Malaysians (refer to TFM_Cuzario) as they would not understand the nuances of the variety in the language itself, and would probably annoy them. Another respondent (refer to TFM_Haire) stated that while CMalE is "cool", it is only so within the local context, but if the variety is brought out of Malaysia, it would most likely cause misunderstandings in the Malaysian's attempt to communicate with people, wherever they go.

In the interview in Part II, there were respondents who answered in the standard variety first (e.g. refer to TFM_ Ili) as well as some response with both orders mixed up instead of one systematic order; which is CMalE first, then standard English (refer to TFM_Dom, TFM_Cuzario). This is most likely because of the fact that the respondent is more used to using either variety first in their daily lives, which means that in the case of Ili, she is more used to using the standard variety of English instead of the CMalE as she is living in Nagoya, which meant that she could not use CMalE as frequently as a Malaysian living in Malaysia would; therefore forming a habit in her to respond first in the standard variety of English. Dom and Cuzario, however, are living in Kuala Lumpur currently, which allows them to interchange between both varieties; hence showing in their responses, where they automatically respond in the variety of the language which they are most used to using albeit being prompted on the order in the questions.

There were also respondents who were confused between the terms "Colloquial Malaysian English" and "Standard English" (refer to TFM_Henry) as the more well-known term was "*Manglish*" and "English" to refer to both varieties, hence causing a minor confusion in some respondents, where the respondent stated "Colloquial English" to refer to "Standard English" and "Standard Malaysian English" to refer to CMalE. Some respondents would refer to

both terms as "colloquial English" versus "proper English" (refer to TFM_Aaron), while others say "in Malaysia, we say…and in proper English it will be" (refer TFM_Haire).

Some responses took more initial buffer time to think, however once an example is established in either one of the language variety, the respondent could quickly switch to the other variety. This could be credited to the fact that there are many different ways to respond to one question, especially in the case of CMalE (refer to TFM_Aaron; TFM_Dom). Most of the time, especially for the respondents who classify themselves as "high proficiency English speakers", the exchange between the two varieties were really fast, be it with or without prompting.

The high proficiency English speakers would also use the official Malaysian English to respond to the "standard variety" question; the acrolectal version of Malaysian English, with the proper grammatical order but with a noticeable difference in pronunciation (e.g. refer to TFM_Aaron where he pronounced "that" as /dæt/ instead of /ðæt/). Also, the intonation of the utterances were more monotonous compared to the standard British English pronunciations. The choice of lexis is also another point that differentiates the acrolectal Malaysian English to the standard British English. While maintaining the correct grammatical responses, Malaysians tend to keep their answers short and simple instead of answering it in full sentences. For instance, in the same recording, when asked regarding his proficiency, the respondent said "*high*" instead of answering the question in a full sentence.

There were also responses given in Malay and some Chinese dialects first when being interviewed (refer to TFM_Stephanie). In Stephanie's interview, she used the word "*lor*", "*goyang kaki*", and "*mou yeh zhou*". As explained in Chapter 2.5, *lor* is an emphasis as well as a filler to a statement, usually stated in a nonchalant form. *Goyang kaki* is a Malay idiom which means, to be free; without any job-related responsibilities; and *mou yeh zhou* in Cantonese literally means "nothing to do". In the later part of the interview she also used the typical Cantonese expression "*gwei lou*"to refer to the Westerners. This is believed to be because of the fact that Malaysians tend to approach daily situations in either one of the Chinese dialects or Malay first, especially if it is their mother tongue. Hence, in formal situations, such as an interview, the usage of the dialect/mother tongue is seen especially amongst Malaysians of average proficiency.

In another interview (refer to TFM_Cuzario), CMalE is used in a way where there is only one English word, while the rest in the sentence are in Malay. For example he said, "that *baju biru ada tak*?" which means "do you have that blue shirt?", and "boss, *hantar bill*" which means "to send the bill". This also proves the point above that Malay is his "go-to" language when he approaches daily situations like these.

There were also usages of Malay slang words, like *lepak* (to hang out), *korang* (Malay *portmanteau* words made out of "*kamu*" (you) and "*orang*" (people); which means *you guys* if translated into English), *mamak* (a typical Muslim-Indian restaurant), *tak boleh pakai* (useless), and *bayar* (to pay, usually said to request for the bill) [refer to TFM_Ili, TFM_Stephanie; for example], as well as elements of reduplication, like *'can, can, can'* for emphasis (refer to TFM_Rachel). The usual Malaysian words as explained in Chapter 2.5 above like *lah, oi* (an informal manner to call someone, usually a close friend or a family member of the same generation, such as among siblings), *ah*, *boss*, *wan*/one, *minum* (to drink), *mah*, etc. are seen throughout the other interviews.

There were constant laughter throughout interviews as it is not common to use CMalE in formal contexts; therefore causing initial awkwardness for most respondents. Most Malaysians tend to use the mesolect instead of the basilect version of Malaysian English so as to allow non-Malaysians to somewhat catch the gist of their communication in CMalE; what Malaysians would term as the *"effective" Manglish*. For instance, in TFM_Angeline's interview for the first question in Part II, she said "*pizza, one, please?*" for the CMalE version. It is immediately understood by anyone who understands English that she is requesting for a plate of pizza in a restaurant.

However, we can see the basilect version, or the essence of CMalE which is only understood among Malaysians when observing TFM_Stephanie. She uses examples such as "*Got dis (this) wan ah? I wan* (want) *oh. Dun haf* (Don't have)*? Aiyoh why like that? I call before wor!*" to ask about the availability of a material in a shop. There were many influences from the Chinese language, mainly from the Mandarin dialect. The breakdown of the sentences as an example is shown in below:

Mandarin	*you zhe ge (*dongxi*) ma*?
English	got this wan (*thing*) ah?
Mandarin	*wo yao oh.*
English	I want oh
Mandarin	*aiyo, wei shen me zhe yang zi?*
English	Aiyoh, why like that?
Mandarin	*wo zhiqian you tongguo dian hua!*
English	I before have call telephone *wor*! / I call before *wor*.

The pronunciation of the basilect is also reflected in the way she pronunces her utterences. As a Malaysian Chinese who speaks more in dialects than in English, the things she says are mostly influenced by the Chinese languages, especially in Mandarin. In the Mandarin dialect, there are fifteen phonemes which do not exist in their pronunciation but they do in the English language, therefore causing slight difficulties or deviations in their Englisn pronunciations. For example, /**b/, /g/, /d/, /v/, /θ/, /ð/, /z/, /s/, /ʃ/, /ʒ/, /h/, /tʃ/, /dʒ/, /r/**, and /**j/.** As the /v/ in *have* does not exist, the pronunciation of *have* is pronounced instead as /hæf/. The same concept is shown throughout her CMalE expressions and hence explains how a non-Malaysian would not understand the basilect version of the Malaysian English due to the mother tongue influence of the speakers of CMalE.

It is also interesting to note that in the final sentence, albeit stating that the basilect's grammatical order is according to the mother tongue, there are some consciousness regarding the correct grammatical order (even though little) in English. One can see that instead of saying "*I before have call telephone wor*", Stephanie said "I call before wor". This is also reflective of how a Malaysian with an average level of English proficiency would possess a consciousness on making the "correct" grammatical statement in English, even at the basilect's level of speech.

Throughout this study, it is also noticed that Malaysians are a very expressive people. The respondents tend to question about the details regarding the situation so they could better imagine their responses. Most of the time, the answers were given after they explained a more specific scenario (e.g. refer to TFM_Haire), such as entering into a restaurant and ordering a specific item in the menu. The intonation of the responses, however; were rather animated, but is not according to the standard intonation in the English pronunciation system, but rather highly influenced by the respondents' mother tongues, which are mostly monotonal. However, this further proves the fact that the CMalE as well as the Malaysian English in general has an identity on its own. Thirusanku and Melor Md. Yunus said:

> "Malaysian English has an identity of its own and the many deviations in these lexical aspects make it a distinct variety of English." (Thirusanku and Melor Md. Yunus, 2012)

In the interviews, albeit some hiccups, such as the jumbling of examples between varieties due to unawareness, the respondents of this study could switch between CMalE and the standard variety of English without a hitch. This could be factored to the lifestyles of urban and young Malaysians who are in contact with both Malaysians and non-Malaysians in formal and informal occassions, causing them to be on their feet to switch between the two varieities although imperfectly (as for the case of the Malaysian speakers of average proficiency in English). Nair-Verugopal (2000), Gill (1999), and Morais (1998) discovered that English is frequently used in workplaces in Malaysia, with some code-switching in to Malay and also with variation between the standard and localised versions (acrolectal/mesolectal/basilectal) according to the situation they are in, such as the person they are conversing with as well as the occasion of the event (formal/informal). Also, a speaker who is capable of speaking the acrolect English would go down to the basilect's level to accommodate the speaker, but a basilect could not go up to the acrolect's level of speech, and CMalE caters for this need in communication amongst Malaysians.

Seeing that Malaysians are constantly in touch with the language and consistently are being placed in an environment that requires them to switch between the standard variety of English to the more localised version of the language to match the interlocutors involved in the interaction. However, this is only made possible if there is a good proficiency base in English for the speaker to enable the switch according to the occasion. Therefore, the hypothesis is proven

that CMalE is not a problem, but a cool phenomenon with the condition that the speaker has to possess at least an average level of proficiency in English.

Having proven the hypothesis, we can now advance to some general conclusions from this study and consider future lines of research.

6. <u>General Conclusions.</u>

The main point of this study is to prove that CMalE, or the colloquial Malaysian English is not a problem, but rather a cool phenomenon only if the speaker is one who possesses at the least, an average level of proficiency in English. Again, this is due to the fact that a person who has poor English proficiency would not be able to differentiate the appropriateness of using certain terms in specific situations as well as a lack of foundation on the grammatical rules in English, therefore the problem is not on CMalE, but rather on the proficiency of the speaker instead.

We have seen the origin of Malaysian English (ME) through walking in the historical timeline of the existence of English in Malaysia, followed by the development of the colloquial version of ME after due to the different ethnicities and the wealth of languages that exist in Malaysia, bringing into it a unique element. Then after we looked at the research conducted for this study through a series of questions which are given through an interview to see if the hypothesis can be proven, and then a discussion took place, where it was agreed that despite the variations, the hypothesis was proven.

There are also a few limitations placed on the respondents to enable a clearer view on the result of the research, which are:

a) **Age:**

The respondents are adults between the ages of 23-45. The age range is chosen because they are people who are either studying or working, hence being constantly in touch with the current advancement of the CMalE, but at the same time being obliged as well to use the standard version of English in Malaysia frequently.

b) Nationality:

The respondents have to be Malaysian and are very in touch with their Malaysian heritage (that is, not making Malaysians who have emigrated from the country and have assimilated themselves into the culture of the country of emigration). Actual geographical location of the Malaysian does not matter so long as they are connected to their Malaysian roots.

c) English Proficiency

The respondents will have to have, at the very least, an average proficiency of the English language. This is because of the fact that a person who possesses a low proficiency in the English language would also affect the speed of the switch not because of the CMalE itself but instead is caused by the lack of proficiency in the standard version of English itself.

When the interviews were held, there were some technical issues which surfaced as the interviews were held online via Skype. This was due to geographical differences as the interviewer lives in Spain while the respondents were either in Malaysia or in other parts of the world. The technical issues were:

a) **Lag in responses.**

The lag in most responses were not consistent. When the lag happens, there is normally a 3-second difference between recipients, which caused most responses to come off as "late".

b) **Choppy answers**.

Due to faulty connections on both sides, sometimes the respondents' answers were rather choppy. A second recording is made should the answers turned out too choppy.

c) **Blurred voices.**

Some respondents were called via Skype to their landline, and probably due to bad phone line connection, some voices were not clear. Case in reference would be TFM_Aaron's interview, which encompassed b) and c).

However thankfully, the interviews were held successfully and the point was made across, that given a good foundation in English, a Malaysian can use CMalE and the standard version of English interexchangably without problems and hence making CMalE a cool phenomenon. Many visitors to the nation wrote to the Malaysian press, stating that they think that the ability to speak both versions can be handy in different situations. One case in example is from a West African writer to theSundaily:

"At a time when everyone is scrambling to be proficient in English, the butchered forms of English are frowned upon. However, language in any form is part of culture. We have to understand that not everyone is able to speak "global English" (whatever that may be), therefore, knowing how to speak Manglish or other hatched forms of the English language can come in handy. We can also learn a lesson or two from the chameleons, those who for example, can switch from Manglish to the Queen's English without skipping a beat" (You speak Manglish?,2006)

If foreign visitors concur that the phenomenon which is CMalE is not a problem, but is a handy tool and that it is a part of the country's culture, then Malaysians should be able to embrace the idea that CMalE is not the issue, but instead is part of the Malaysian identity and is a cool phenomenon to those who can speak it as it is unique. Albeit stated that it is a "close cousin" to Singlish, both Englishes are different, and therefore a Singaporean would not be able to speak CMalE as well as a Malaysian would, though they can identify the similarity between the two. Therefore, this uniqueness only exist in Malaysia, and this itself makes CMalE not a problem, but an attraction, especially for language enthusiasts who are non-Malaysians.

It is important, however, that the government place a higher importance on the education on the "correct" English to enable Malaysians to be able to be a "chameleon", as stated in the excerpt above, if they want the Malaysians to step into an international platform in every aspect. So to answer the research questions posed in Chaper 3.1, which are:

a) Is CMalE a problem or a cool phenomenon? Why?
CMalE is a cool phenomenon as it is a part of the Malaysian identity. It is not a problem.

b) Why is the word "cool" used?

In the Introduction chapter, it was explained that the word "cool" is used because "cool" signifies "great" or "fine" in slang; hence the usage is to represent adaptability to the current generation and is an evolving and constantly used language. After the study is made, "cool" is also used because of the unanimous agreement that the ability to speak in CMalE is great.

c) If CMalE is not a problem, what then, is the real issue in this matter?

The real issue in this matter is really, the proficiency of the Malaysians in English. Malaysians should focus not on the phenomenon that is CMalE and highlighting it as a problem, but rather on the improvement of the proficiency of English to enable them to be "linguistic chameleons", that is, to be able to adapt to whichever English that is being spoken in and outside of Malaysia.

As said in the hypothesis, CMalE is not a problem if the speaker has at least, an average proficiency of English because a poor level of proficiency in the language would cause a mixing between the two versions, which would lead to miscommunication in a non-Malaysian setting. Hence, it is important that Malaysians, especially the government, look into the raising of the level of proficiency of Malaysians to avoid this issue. When all Malaysians are able to possess a good command of English, we will not only be able to communicate interculturally in the standard version of English, but we would also, as Malaysians, be able to completely embrace this uniqueness which is the CMalE and not look at it as a problem in the English-speaking society.

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