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Lexical Borrowing in Malaysian Short Stories

Abstract

This paper reports on the ways in which a nativised endonormative variety of English is used as a stylistic device in published postcolonial writings in Malaysia. A two-phase mixed method design is employed to reveal this endonormative stage of linguistic development using a sample of 184 short stories written by Malaysians from 1957 until 2006. These short stories have been drawn from various published anthologies. Selected lexical markers of Malaysian English are used to illustrate the ways a nativised variety of English embeds cultural identity as mirrored in the short stories.

Malaysian Literature in English

According to Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin (2002) and A. L. McLeod, Edwin Thumboo, Shirley Lim and Lloyd Fernando (cited in Quayum 2003, p. 181), the theory of evolutionary development in post colonial literatures establishes Malaysian literature in English as one of the developing independent literatures. The development of this independent and modern post colonial literature is represented by “the appropriation of language and writing for new and distinctive usages” (Ashcroft *et al* 2002, p. 5-6). In Malaysia, the stylistic development of literature in English has evolved in response to colonialism. This paper briefly looks into the development of Malaysian literature in English in line with the linguistic development of the English language in Malaysia from 1957 until 2006. The discussions in this paper are relevant to the study of language use and language choice where varieties of English are embedded in literary texts.

The history of Malaysian literature in English can be traced back to the 1940s and the arrival of the British. During this pre-independence era, the language of instruction for education in Malaya and Singapore was English, especially in missionary and private

schools. The use of English was highly regarded as it was seen as an asset for better job prospects. As discussed by Kachru (1992a), non-native uses of English in “un-English” contexts indicates that English, especially for the elites, assumed an instrumental and regulative function during the era, along with its interpersonal function. This was the linguistic scene in both Malaya and Singapore during the 1940s and until the Japanese Occupation in 1942, which lasted until 1945.

Early writings in English by Malaysians such as G. W. de Silva and Ooi Cheng Teik, and the publication of the first journal of literary work in English at the University of Malaya, *The Cauldron* or *The New Cauldron* (later in 1949), marked the beginning of Malaysian literature in English. . Singapore was at that time part of the Federation of Malaya. The literary writings of Malaysians and Singaporeans in English were much influenced by an aim to develop a hybrid language to unite the multiracial society in Malaya (then) and Singapore (Malachi, 2001). The literature covers different genres and is, for the most part, culturally specific. The writers, using English, weave into their works locally flavoured ideas, realities, imaginations and insights. This was necessary to reach the multiracial society of Malaysia. Maniam (1994) comments that writers write about their personal and real feelings in a post colonial situation, particularly in relation to their country, people, culture and traditions. He claims that the kinds of writing that emerged during the late 1940s and early 1950s were generally biographies and autobiographies, usually themed around the First World War, suffering, and self-identity.

During the 1950s and 1960s, several significant political events took place in Malaysia. These events included the withdrawal of Singapore from Malaysia (1965), the implementation of the National Language Act (1967) and the May 13th racial riot (1969). Each event influenced the direction of Malaysian literature in English. Some writers, both Malays and non-Malays, stated that English was the preferred medium to express their thoughts. When their writing went unrecognised because their choice of English was not viewed as contributing actively towards nation building, some writers migrated to other countries while others stopped writing. Quayum & Wicks (2001, p. x) refer to

the personal crushing experience encountered by these writers as creating “marginalisation and feelings of alienation”.

The mid 1960s and 1970s saw an increase in the number of Malaysian literary works in English (Abdul Manaf, 2000). Most of these writers produced work in a range of genres including short stories, poetry, drama and novels. As pointed out by Maniam (1994), literary works in the form of short stories became more popular in the early 1960s onwards. The short stories were not only published in journals by the University of Malaya, but also in anthologies. Though the development of Malaysian literature in English during these years was critical due to political and sociocultural reasons, it nevertheless thrived, mostly by the persistent effort of an English educated minority (Quayum & Wicks, 2001). In the 1980s, there were Malaysian writers who participated in several English short story writing competitions such as the ‘Asiaweek Short Story Competition’ (Comber, 2000). Held from 1981 until 1988, the ‘Asiaweek Short Story Competition’ encouraged and promoted the talent of promising creative writers from the Asian region including several Malaysian writers whose winning work came to be known.

More serious attempts to promote writing in English by Malaysians can be seen during the 1990s with the publication of several anthologies and books written by Malaysians in English. In the mid 1990s, the *New Straits Times* and the *Star* (two mainstream English newspapers in Malaysia) rigorously supported the ‘Short Stories in English Competition’ (Muhammad, 2001). Additionally, there was an increase in the number of Anglophone women writers in the 1980s and 1990s. Significantly, their works were not themed around the struggle for equality and harmony in the world of the multiracial Malaysian society. Instead these works revolved around once-considered taboo subjects such as sexuality and the female body (Abdul Manaf, 2000). However, as highlighted by Muhammad (2001), poor response and lack of support hindered the development of literature written in English by local writers.

With the growing economy and stable sociopolitical progress, writings of short stories in English by Malaysians since the year 2000 have shown potential for greater development. Muhammad (2001) notes positive feedback for new writing in English to be published in anthologies by Silverfish Books show that “people are still writing”. Similarly, Talib (2004, p. 73), in the *Journal of Commonwealth Literature*, points out that the significant number of literary anthologies published in Malaysia in the late twentieth century is an encouraging sign of “a literature which is re-developing and finding new directions” in line with the Government’s emphases in garnering better usage of English among Malaysians. It is also during this endonormative phase of linguistic development that writers have begun to employ new themes, settings and contexts in their work. Attempts to compile a bibliography of the different genres of Malaysian literature in English have been conducted by literary scholars such as Malachi (2001) and Quayum (2003), to name a few.

Linguistic Development in Malaysia

The development of literature written in English in Malaysia goes hand in hand with the stages of development that English has gone through in that region. According to Gill (1999), the linguistic development of English in Malaysia can be classified into three major phases. The Exonormative Phase, the first phase of linguistic development, is the period of colonialism when there is an inherent dependence on the colonial masters (Gill, 1999). During this phase, the native-speaker’s standard was the British English standard to which the Outer Circle countries referred. Outer Circle countries in this context are countries identified as having non-native varieties of English which have passed through an extended period of colonisation (Kachru, 1992b, p. 356). These countries include Malaysia, Bangladesh, Ghana, India, Philippines, Singapore, Kenya, Nigeria, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Tanzania and Zambia.

After Malaysia achieved independence in 1957, English resumed its role as the exonormative standard in various areas. It was used dominantly as the language for teaching, as well as for communicative purposes during the 1960s and the early 1970s. Kachru (1985) accentuates that linguistic phenomenon in the Outer Circle countries

developed naturally within the society (cited in Gill, 1999, p. 217). Sociolinguistically, English developed naturally and effortlessly into a number of other different varieties.

The next phase of linguistic development is the Expansion Phase or the Independent Phase. This is the phase where many of the Outer Circle countries adopted English as their language for communication (Gill, 1999). The sociolinguistic profile among the three major ethnicities (Malay, Chinese and Indian) resulted in the development of Malaysian English (MalE henceforth), a variety of English that is defined within Malaysia according to its geographical and social distribution (Nair-Venugopal, 2001). Both intranationally and internationally, English developed into different varieties for various communication purposes.

During the 1980s and the 1990s, new varieties of English in Malaysia became richly diversified and heterogeneous, defined by the sociocultural environment to which they belonged. Nair-Venugopal (2003) reports that the usage of localised variety in Malaysian business setting, for example, had acceded as the growing workforce was shaped by the linguistics and sociocultural impacts of Malay as the national and official language. During this Independent Phase, English was hence considered the language for international communication as well as for economic survival in a borderless world (Gill, 1999, p. 218).

The third linguistic development phase that English went through in Malaysia is the Endonormative Phase or the Post Independent Phase. Gill (1999) argues that during this phase English is looked at as being the international language in numerous international functions. That is, English adopts a pragmatic function in meeting the global challenge of competitive markets. She points out that to communicate effectively and comprehensibly with others from different parts of the world, the crux in this phase is consolidation and practical progress. Due to this, attitudinal change towards the emerging subvarieties at the lectal levels, MalE is essential as a new and appropriate standard for sociocultural contexts (Kachru cited in Gill, 1999, p. 25). The basilectal, mesolectal and acrolectal levels are respectively defined as “low” social dialect (for

informal settings); “middle” social dialect (for semi formal situations), and “high” social dialect (for official and educational purposes) (Baskaran, 1994 in Gill, 1999; Preshous, 2001; Nair-Venugopal, 2001; Rajadurai, 2004).

Methodology

The research described in this paper combined two different stages. The first stage involved collecting short stories written by Malaysian writers in English from a series of anthologies that were published between Independence (1957) and 2006. Quantitatively, stratified random sampling, a sampling that is mostly used in selecting participants, was adapted for the research. This kind of sampling, as defined by Seliger and Shohamy (2000) and Kumar (1996), was used because it offered greater accuracy and reduced variability whereby each short story had “equal” and “independent” chance of selection in the sample. As a result, a total of 184 short stories were drawn based on simple random sampling. The short stories were then sorted according to the period they were published and the ethnic background of their writers. The itemisation of sample short stories according to period and ethnicity, resulted in the table at Figure 1.

Phase	Ethnicity			
	Malay	Chinese	Indian	TOTAL
Phase 1 (1957 – 1980)	14	18	5	37
Phase 2 (1981 – 2002)	75	16	19	110
Phase 3 (2003 – 2006)	6	15	16	37
TOTAL	95	49	40	184

Figure 1: Sample Size According to Phase and Ethnicity

Analyses of the short stories then dealt with the emergence of writings in new varieties of English, specifically the use of code-mixing in the texts. In other words, the use of language mixture or MalE as one distinctive linguistic characteristic that Malaysian writers used in their works was studied in all short stories selected. At this stage, based on the emerging themes, all data derived from the stories were analysed qualitatively. These themes were identified according to the varietal markings of the use of nativised

English variety at both word and sentence levels. In refining the categories and subcategories, all of the data then went through at least six different stages of coding with three different stages of triangulation.

For the purpose of this paper, the selected markers examined in the short stories involved only the use of lexis—specifically borrowed words. To illustrate, linguistic borrowing is one of the characteristics of a language contact situation, especially in Malaysia where the communities are bilingual or/and multilingual. In particular, linguistic borrowing not only takes place in daily communication, but also in written forms such as magazines, newspapers and literature.

Lexical Borrowing

Thomason and Kaufman (1991) claim that lexical borrowing includes “distinct lexical items from one code in the lexicon of another”, while Fasold (1991) asserts that borrowing constitutes only the transfer of words and not the transfer of phrases or “larger units” (cited in Dako, 2002, p. 49-50). In another definition, Hudson (1996) highlights that borrowed words or loan-words carry “a more or less foreign ‘flavour’” and can be recognised by most people, who can even identify where the words originate from. Such instances can be seen at the sentence and text levels in literature in English, for example, where they can be contextually and stylistically marked as a result of the literary choices made by the writers. Moreover, these marked choices of words and sentence structures could serve as indicators to the identity of the writers, as defined by their cultural background and upbringing, as well as their linguistic repertoire.

Quoting Myers-Scotton (1991, p. 218) in Dako (2002, p. 50), borrowing involves “recurring items in a specific corpus of data and notions that are ‘new’ to the speech community”. In addition, Coulmas (2005, p. 110) and Dako (2002, p. 53) identify lexical borrowing as the frequent use of existing local vocabulary with some degree of morphological and phonological integration into the matrix language. But Akmajian, Demers and Harnish (1984, p. 335) believe that borrowing is a situation where words are

borrowed from one language and become a ‘regular vocabulary item’ in the matrix language, rather than the result of code switching.

In this paper, lexical borrowing refers to a borrowed item that functions according to the morphosyntactic rules of English, the language into which it has been borrowed. This means only borrowed items from local source languages (such as Malay, Chinese and Tamil) are included. These consist of only a single semantic unit with one or more lexeme. Based on sociolinguistic-oriented work on variety in use, the sociocultural characteristics underlying writing styles are considered in order to identify significant evidence of, and insights into the way(s) culture is embedded in the short stories.

The findings of lexical borrowing in this paper are divided into two different parts. The first part, Morphologically Marked Borrowed Words, discusses examples of new words derived due to several morphological processes. The second part, Culturally-Based Borrowed Words, deals with the kind of borrowing not affected by any morphological processes or word-formation processes that are grammatically marked.

Part 1: Morphologically Marked Borrowed Words

Data analyses of the sample short stories revealed that Malaysian writers use morphologically marked borrowed words as a stylistic device in their writing. The morphological forms include the use of derivations, inflections, multiple affixations, noun modifiers and compounding, as illustrated in Figure 2.

Derivation is a morphology process where a new word is formed by adding a morpheme (a smallest linguistic meaning) to a base. Though derivation results in different meanings, the grammatical classes of the newly formed words might not necessarily be affected. In the Malaysian short stories, derivational prefixes were found to be attached to borrowed words, thus resulting in new words that combined morphemes from both the source language and the matrix language. Three examples of borrowed words that underwent the English prefixation are <pre>*merdeka* (days), <ex>*reformasi* (members) and <un>*gedeber* (manner). To illustrate, in *pre-merdeka*, the English prefix <pre> is

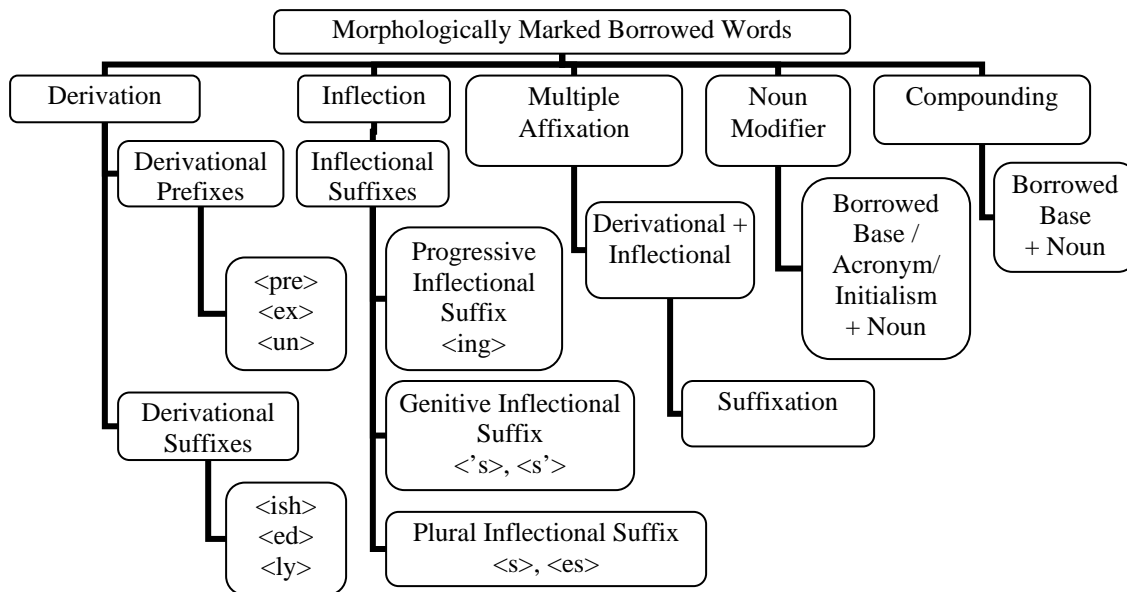


Figure 2: Morphological Forms of Lexical Borrowing in Malaysian Short Stories

attached before the borrowed Malay word *merdeka* (or Independence). This resulted in a change of meaning from ‘Independence’ to ‘before Independence’ (‘before *merdeka*’). The next example, however, shows how a different prefix is attached to a borrowed base. *Ex-reformasi* consists of a prefix <ex> (which means ‘former’) and a Malay borrowed word *reformasi*. Interestingly, *reformasi* is a mediated borrowed word that originated from the English word ‘reformation’. Hence, the new word *ex-reformasi* stands for “former reformation”, which specifically refers to a political event or rally that took place in Malaysia during the late 1990s. Although changes in meaning were noted in all cases of derivational prefixation found in the short stories, no changes involving grammatical categories were observed.

Derivations found in the short stories also involved the use of suffixation. The borrowed words are marked with the use of several different suffixes such as <ish>, <ed> and <ly>. For example, the words *gedeber*<ish> and *gedeber*<ly> are derived when the borrowed word *gedeber* is attached with the suffixes <ish> and <ly> respectively. Hence, *gedeberish* means ‘like a *gedeber*’, describing the men who were ‘*gedeber*’, while *gedeberly* adds manner to the word *gedeber*. In comparison to derivational prefixation, derivational suffixation results in changes of word class from nouns to adjectives.

The next morphology process involving lexical borrowing found in the Malaysian short stories in English is the use of **inflections**. An inflection takes place when an inflectional affix is added to the base. In inflection, the grammatical class of the newly-formed word also does not change. There are three kinds of inflectional suffixation found; the first one is the use of progressive inflectional suffix. For example, the progressive suffix <ing> is attached after the borrowed base words *lepak* and *salaam* to indicate the progressive aspect. The inflected verb of *lepak* in *lepaking* shows the incomplete action of *lepaking* (or loafing), whilst the inflected verb *salaam* in *salaaming* demonstrates the incomplete action of *salaaming* (or shaking hands).

The second inflectional suffixation used by Malaysian writers is genitive inflectional suffixation. The genitive noun morphemes found in the short stories include the use of genitive suffix <'s> for singular subject and the genitive suffix <s'> for plural subject. In this inflectional suffixation, the borrowed base words from Malay, Chinese and Tamil are all inflected with either the morphemes <'s> or <s'> to indicate possession or ownership of something. A few examples include words such as *tuan*<'s> (employer), *syaitan*<'s> (devil), *Tok*<'s> (grandfather), *Ayah*<'s> (father), *athan*<'s> (brother or beloved), and *towkay*<'s> (Chinese store owner).

However, the most common usage of inflection observed in the short stories involved the use of plural inflectional suffixation. This third kind of inflection shows how borrowed base words are inflected with the plural noun morpheme to mark number or plurality. In particular, the borrowed words take plural forms when the suffixes <s> and <es> are added after the borrowed base. Some of the inflected borrowed nouns found in the short stories are *dungu*<s>, *tikar*<s>, *kolam*<s>, *puja*<s>, *chappati*<s>, *angpow*<s>, *keris*<es> and *toddi*<es>. In all cases of inflections, the new inflected borrowed words formed by Malaysian writers in their writings were found to function in the same grammatical class in accordance with the morphosyntactic structures of the matrix language.

The next category, **multiple affixation**, involves the use of a Malay base with an English and/or Malay morpheme. The intra-word mixed morphology may include the use of

prefixation, suffixation or both prefixation and suffixation. Although multiple affixation is the least used among the Malaysian writers writing in English, the limited number of instances nevertheless contributes a significant understanding of the way an endonormative variety of English has been creatively derived in literature. In these newly formed words, a few English affixes are attached to the base words borrowed from Malay and Kelantan Malay, a regional Malay dialect in Malaysia. The word *un-gedeber-like*, for instance, is derived when the prefix <un> is attached before the borrowed base word which is indicative of negation. Thus, a change in meaning is observed. When the suffix <like> is attached after the base word *un-gedeber*, further change in meaning is involved. *Un-gedeber-like*, as a result, refers to the manner of the base word *un-gedeber* or not *gedeber* (that is not “macho”).

Betudung-ed, on the other hand, is one example of a new word derived when a borrowed affix from Malay is used in combination with another affix from English. According to Karim, Onn, Musa and Mahmood (2008, p. 68-69), the prefix <be> or <ber> in Malay transforms a Malay noun to a verb. In this case, the Malay noun *tudung* (or a ‘head scarf’) functions as a verb when the prefix <be> is added before the base. *Betudung* in Malay, thus becomes an intransitive verb that requires no complements. When attached with the English suffix <ed>, the borrowed verb *betudung* becomes an adjective to describe a person wearing a *tudung*. These two examples show that multiple affixations involving borrowed items, are derived in accordance with the grammatical structures of the English language, the matrix language used in the literary texts.

Furthermore, results from the analyses demonstrate that Malaysian writers also use lexical borrowing in the form of **compounding**. Compounding, the combination of two or more base words or root morphemes, in this case is observed to have contained two base words in which the first base word that originated from a local language is combined with a second base word from English. [*satay-man*]_N, [*beruk-attack*]_N, [*kway teow man*]_N, [*kebaya-like*]_{Adj}, [*lychee-like*]_{Adj} and [*sari-clad*]_{Adj} are several instances of compounding involving lexical borrowing found in the short stories.

As evident in the stories, compounding also took the form of compounded words and suffixation using the borrowed items. In [*padi*-planters]_N and [*mee*-sellers]_N for example, the noun-forming morpheme or the agentive morpheme <er> is added after the verbs ‘plant’ and ‘sell’. This results in the agent nouns ‘planter’ and ‘seller’ which correspond to the respective verbs. Next, the plural noun morpheme <s> is attached after the base words ‘planter’ and ‘seller’ respectively in order to mark plurality. Consequently, *padi*-planters and *mee*-sellers both refer to more than one ‘planter’ and more than one ‘seller’. Some other examples of compound words involving borrowed items affected by suffixations include [*salam*-sender]_N, [*pelesit*-consumption]_N, [*attap*-roofed]_{Adj}, [*kolah*-drenching]_{Adj} and [*sari*-covered]_{Adj}.

It was also discovered that writers from the post Independence years use lexical borrowing as **noun modifiers** in their writing. In this paper, noun modifiers are instances where borrowed words are used in attributing the head nouns in the stories. In particular, noun modifiers using borrowed items are employed to add specificity to the English head nouns. The borrowed words, usually in the forms of borrowed nouns and verbs from the source language, modified the head nouns to indicate more information such as type, origin, purpose and variety. A few examples of noun modifiers as exemplified in the short stories are *bersanding* + (ceremonies), *balik kampung* + (trip), *tai kor* + (friends), *tua pek kong* + (shrine), *sari* + (border) and *kondai* + (buns).

To elaborate, in *bersanding* ceremonies and *balik kampung* trip, the borrowed Malay noun modifiers *bersanding* and *balik kampung* describe further the type of ceremonies taking place, while *balik kampung* demonstrates the act of “*balik kampung*” (or going back to the hometown) as the purpose of the trip. *Tai kor* friends and *tua pek kong* shrine, in addition, show how the borrowed Chinese nouns (*tai kor* and *tua pek kong*) modify the head nouns (friends and shrine) to specify the kind of friends and shrine that are referred to. Similarly, the borrowed Tamil nouns of *sari* and *kondai* in *sari* border and *kondai* buns also illustrate the use of borrowed items in modifying the respective head noun mentioned.

Likewise, Malaysian writers also use borrowed acronyms and initialisms to modify the English head nouns in their literary works. Two examples of the use of acronyms as noun modifiers are *Sukom* gold and *FELDA* settlers, while an example of initialism used as a noun modifier is *DBKL* wastebin. *Sukom* and *FELDA* are both acronyms that refer to S*ukan* K*omanwel* (or Commonwealth Games) and F*ederal* L*and* D*evelopment* A*uthority* respectively. *DBKL*, on the other hand, is derived by combining the initials of D*ewan* B*andaraya* K*uala* L*umpur* (or Kuala Lumpur City Hall). In all instances where the borrowed base modified the English head nouns, grammatical shift took place and resulted in the noun modifiers functioning as adjectival. In short, this results in a morphosyntactically acceptable kind of borrowing that marks the use of a localised variety within the exonormative standard.

Part 2: Culturally-based Borrowed Words in Malaysian Short Stories

The use of lexical borrowing found in the short stories proves there is a dominant usage of Malay, Chinese and Tamil words in Malaysian literature in English. Lexical items that are borrowed are mostly reflective of the sociocultural and the multiracial society of Malaysians; dealing with concepts related to their cultural, religious and traditional practices. As observed in the data, lexical borrowing involving culturally-based items includes not only borrowed words from Malay, Chinese and Tamil, but also mediated Malay words from other source languages such as Arabic, Sanskrit, Hindi and Persian to name a few. The use of mediated lexical borrowing from Arabic, for example, illustrates the dominant position of Islam as the religion of the Malays while direct borrowing from Chinese and Tamil were also found to signify their respective faiths and beliefs. While the focus of this paper is lexical borrowing, culturally-based borrowed words as found in the Malaysian short stories can be classified into three different groups as shown in Figure 3.

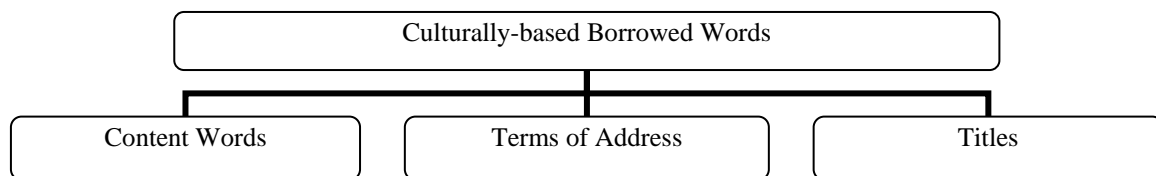


Figure 3: Culturally-based Borrowed Words in Malaysian Short Stories

Cannon (1992), Kennedy (2001) and Dako (2002), in studying lexical borrowing, categorise borrowed words according to these words semantic categories. These categories provide an insight into how lexical borrowing functions as a stylistic marker of MalE in the short stories analysed. Figure 4 illustrates further distribution of all borrowed words found in the short stories based on their semantic fields.

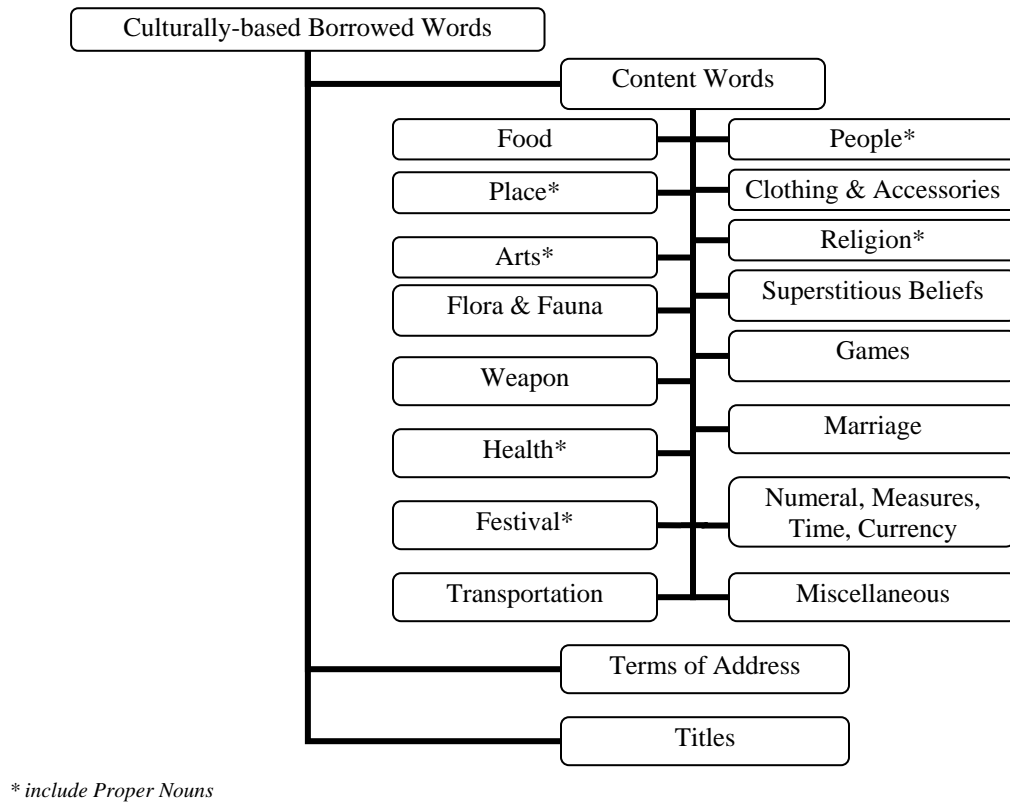


Figure 4: Borrowed Content and Function Words in Malaysian Short Stories

In the study of the short stories, it was found that more than 80% of the borrowed lexical data contained **content words** that largely consisted of nouns. The total number of words borrowed from local languages into English, including proper names, was 463 words. Most semantic fields, such as Food, People, Place, Clothing & Accessory, Arts, Religion and Superstitious Beliefs, for example, denote the use of many borrowed words from local languages for different cultural, religious and traditional concepts. In most data on lexical borrowing (i.e. Content Words), borrowed items contain cultural elements/terms that cannot be expressed in the matrix language. In some cases, the concept might not

even exist in English, thus resulting in a writer resorting to local languages in order to express the cultural concept. Holmes (1992, p. 50) states that this indicates borrowing due to the lack of knowledge of the vocabulary or lexical need which commonly consists of single words, mainly nouns.

This can be seen in borrowed words, such as *bersanding*, *andam*, and *pemajangan*, which are each associated with Malay wedding customs. *Thali* and *agni*, on the other hand, are borrowed to refer to the Indian marriage ceremony. Lexical borrowing in relation to different religious beliefs is also quite common in the short stories. These borrowed items mostly refer to God and the rituals involved in performing religious activities. Some examples, taken from the data, include the use of *Tua Peh Kong*, *Sai Kong* and *pooja*. The first two words are borrowed from Chinese (referring to God) while *pooja*, *thirunur* and *kumkum* are borrowed from Tamil (referring to a religious ceremony or prayer by the Hindus and items used in their prayers). In contrast, *telekong* and *masjid* are borrowed words from Malay. *Telekong* is the all-white robe used by women in prayers and *masjid* refers to mosque.

Another semantic field that involves many borrowed lexical items is Clothing and Accessories. The data reveals that Malaysian writers use borrowed words for clothing in most of the short stories. The most common borrowed word is *sarong*, aside from *cheongsam*, *samfoo*, *baju melayu*, *baju kurung*, *sari* and *dhoti*. Each of these traditional costumes is indicative of the three major ethnic groups in Malaysia—the Malays, the Chinese and the Indians.

However, the most prominent semantic field recording the most borrowed items is the food category. A total of 87 borrowed words are recorded for different kinds of food, with at least 33 referring to Malay food (such as *roti jala*, *ikan bilis*, *nasi lemak*, *rendang*, *nasi dagang*, *ayam perchik*, *gulai ikan*, *laksa* and *satay*). Another 13 words are documented in relation to Chinese food (such as *dim sum*, *siew mai*, *konlo mee*, *hokkien mee* and *tau sar pau*), while 11 words are borrowed to refer to Indian food (such as *roti prata*, *payasam*, *wadeh*, *muruku* and *thosai*). The remaining data shows borrowed words

for fruit, vegetables, desserts and drinks that are common to Malaysians regardless of their ethnic background. Some examples of these words include *rambutan*, *durian*, *chilli padi*, *petola*, *ais kacang*, *teh tarik*, *kacang putih* and *assam masin*. In addition, out of the 87 borrowed words recorded for food, 11 of them describe different kinds of rice, 5 different kinds of noodles, 15 different kinds of desserts, 9 different kinds of drinks and at least 5 different kinds of snacks. Food, as highlighted in the data analyses, plays a very significant role in the multicultural identity of most Malaysians.

The next semantic category that is much influenced by the multiracial setting in Malaysia is the use of different **terms of address**. To illustrate, *amma* and *thambi* are Tamil words which refer to elder sister and a young man, respectively. Meanwhile, *Kong-kong* and *Poh Poh* are borrowed items from Chinese. *Kong-kong* in English means grandfather whilst *Poh Poh* means grandmother. Several other terms of address that are borrowed by the writers include those used for parents (*Mak*, *Ibu*, *Ayah*, and *Abah*), siblings (*peria akka*, *annaeh*, and *kakak*), and uncles and aunts (*Pakcik* and *Makcik*).

A few examples from the data also show items borrowed to illustrate a cultural concept that does not exist in English, specifically in relation to terms of address. This kind of borrowing was found in regards to the kinship system which is well-established among the Malays. In a traditional Malay family, the sequence into which one is born determines the term of address used. In the data, the use of *Kakcik* refers to the youngest sister, while *Kakndak* refers to the fourth sister in the family. *Pak Long*, in contrast, is the eldest uncle in the family. *Long* or *sulong*, in this example of borrowing, refers to the eldest one in the family (Kamus Dewan, 2005). *Andak* (or the clipped form *-ndak*) is used for the fourth sibling, while *kecik* (or *-cik*) is used for the youngest sibling (Kamus Dewan, 2005). These three terms can be used either for a male or a female sibling. Thus, when a gender marker is combined with each term of address, a more specific one is derived. As illustrated in the short stories, *Pak* (literally means ‘father’) is used for uncle and *Mak* (literally means ‘mother’) is used for aunt. In addition, *Kak* (or *Kakak*) is used for sister, while *Bang* (or *Abang*) is used for brother. It is also important to note that, in some of the short stories analysed, several of these terms of address are also used to show

respect to non-family members. Attributing respect is highly valued in Malaysian culture, regardless of the ethnic background of the addresser and the addressee.

Data analyses of culturally-based borrowed items show that from 1957 until 2006, Malaysian writers employed lexical borrowing for **titles** that are particular to Malaysia. The short stories illustrate that all titles found are borrowed only from Malay. Such instances include the use of titles like *Dato’/Dato*, *Datuk*, *Datin*, *Penggawa* and *Penghulu*. *Tan Sri*, *Datuk Maharajalela*, *Puan Sri* and *Kapitan Cina*, in contrast, are examples of borrowed titles that are compounded in Malay. In all instances, the borrowed titles are in the form of proper names.

Conclusion

Comber (2000, p. 1), from his editing of prize-winning Asian stories, notes that Asian English literature very much concentrates on the writers’ concern with people around them from their Asian point of view. The writings, which he describes as excellent, are distinct because they carry with them “the smell and the feel of Asia”. The influence of Malay and other ethnic languages such as Cantonese, Hokkien, Mandarin and Tamil in Malaysia exemplify a “mixed lexicon bred of pluralism where English was the common arena for interaction” (Vatikiotis, 1991, cited in Gill, 1999, p. 217). Subsequently, the linguistic and sociocultural impacts of Malay as the national and official language, has also influenced the style of writing among Malaysian writers. According to Landow (2002), the use of Malay language had affected the Malaysian educational policy where Malay became the official language, both in education and in government transactions. Although English was not abandoned and continued to be used widely in Malaysia, it became more nativised due to its functions in different domains and the long period of exposure Malaysians had to the language.

Significantly, the younger generation with Malay-medium education background influenced the changes to MalE since they were more used to bilingual and multilingual resources (such as code-switching and code-mixing). The more colloquial MalE was highly valued as a sign of “solidarity and camaraderie”, associated with the “growing

sense of pride and affinity” (Preshous, 2001; Rajadurai, 2004, p. 54). Furthermore, it is rapidly on the rise as compared to the more formal type of English. In other words, MalE is identified as uniquely Malaysian, and associated with national as well as ethnic harmony. Nair-Venugopal (2003) states that MalE functions as a neutral solidarity code in Malaysia because it has the elements of being versatile, practical and creative.

Thorne (1981) mentions that most writers have their own preferred structures and these are maintained in their work; slight shifts in syntactic structure will result in stylistic effects. As such, the domain of language use is important in defining writers’ style of writing (Leech and Short, 1984, p. 38; Marco, 2004, p. 73–74). De Souza (1984, p. 3) points out that the need for a literature that represents a nation has “inevitably conditioned the kinds of concerns and even the language of the post-war generation of writers”. Kachru (1992a) in his influential study “Models for Non-native Englishes”, advances the idea that the use of English for literary purposes is imaginative and innovative. As has been shown by the Malaysian writers, ‘Malaysianising’ English through lexical borrowing has marked a literature that linguistically and contextually resonates both cultural and national identity.

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