DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 154 624 FL 009 470

AUTHOR Wong, Irene F. H.
TITLE English in Malaysia.
PUB DATE 78
NOTE 21p.; Revised version of a paper presented at the Conference on English as an International Auxiliary Language (Honolulu, Hawaii, April 1-15, 1978); Not available in hard copy due to marginal legibility of original document.

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 Plus Postage. HC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS American English; Communicative Competence (Languages); Dialect Studies; Educational Policy; *English (Second Language); English for Special Purposes; Grammar; Indonesian Languages; Language of Instruction; Language Planning; Language Usage; *Language Variation; Linguistic Borrowing; *Malay; Mutual Intelligibility; Native Speakers; *Nonstandard Dialects; Pronunciation; *Regional Dialects; Sociolinguistics; *Standard Spoken Usage; Structural Analysis; Vocabulary
IDENTIFIERS *Malaysia

ABSTRACT

In the last 15 years or so, Malaysian English has begun to come into its own as a dialect peculiar to its own region and yet intelligible on the whole to English speakers everywhere. There is evidence that English is undergoing a transitional stage in Malaysia; use of English is progressively reduced as use of Bahasa Malaysia is increased. The language of instruction in non-private schools is Malay, with English being learned as a second language. Most English-speaking Malaysians use a local dialect in informal situations and when conversing with Malaysians. A more widely used speech form, modeled on standard British or American, is used on a formal level and with non-natives. There are deviations from standard English structure in both dialects, with the local dialect being less complex than the more widely used speech form and exhibiting more deviation from standard structure in terms of phonology, grammar, and vocabulary. Although, to a certain degree, adherence to a standard model of English is still demanded on the formal level, particularly with regard to written language and specifically in the area of grammar, there is a trend toward a more widely used speech form that is distinct from educated native-speaker English and that incorporates a number of the features of the local dialect. Accordingly, educational policy in Malaysia now stresses learning English for communicative competence, as a tool. Because there are no materials at present for teaching functional English, standard English is still used as a model. This will ensure mutual intelligibility between the native speaker and the educated Malaysian. (AM)

English in Malaysia

Irene F. H. Wong
University of Malaya

Revised version of a paper, "English as an International Auxiliary Language (EIAL) in Malaysia", presented for the Conference on English as an International Auxiliary Language (EIAL), April 1-15, 1978, organized by the Culture Learning Institute, East-West Center, Honolulu, Hawaii.

1.0 Background

Malaysia is a country with three main ethnic groups (Malays, Chinese, and Indians), each with its own language and dialects. English was first introduced to the country through the trading operations of the British East India Company and spread through religious and educational activities from the early nineteenth century on. Until the country achieved her independence from British rule in 1957, the greatest social and economic advantages came with the learning of English, so that the most ambitious and far-sighted of each race sent their children to English-medium schools for a Western-type education. This has resulted in a fairly large section of the population knowing English, although with varying degrees of proficiency. At the top are those who look upon English as their primary language and who use it with near native-speaker proficiency. Lower down the scale are those not so fluent in the language but who nevertheless have an adequate command of it for basic communication purposes. All in all though, the standard of English in Malaysia has in the past been among the highest for any ESL or EFL country, with the standards of correctness being those of educated native-speaker British English.

One may claim that it is only in the last fifteen years or so that Malaysian English has begun to come into its own as yet another dialect of English, different from any other recognized dialect of English, peculiar to its own region, and yet intelligible on the whole to English-speakers everywhere. Through political independence and growing political maturity, Malaysians have come to realize that no longer is it necessary or desirable to aim at a foreign standard of English for themselves. Moreover, with the withdrawal of the majority of Britishers from the country, no longer is it even possible to model Malaysian speech on native-speaker British English. This has been recognized at the official level, as can be seen, for instance, in the following statement of aims found in the Teachers' Handbook for The Post-1970 Primary School English Syllabus, issued by the Ministry of Education in 1971:

> Malaysians are learning English increasingly as a language of international communication. The aim should therefore continue to be to teach children to speak in such a way that they will be understood not only by fellow-Malaysians, but also by speakers of English from other parts of the world. ...
>
> It should however be noted that our aim of 'international intelligibility' does not imply that our pupils should necessarily speak exactly like Englishmen: there would not be sufficient time to achieve this, nor is it necessary. What is aimed at is that they should be able to speak with acceptable rhythm and stress, and to produce the sounds of English sufficiently well for a listener to be able to distinguish between similar words, e.g. pan - pen. (p. 3)

The position of English in the country has also changed. The medium of instruction in all the schools (with the exception of private schools meant for non-nationals) and most tertiary institutions is now the national language, which is Malay (or Bahasa Malaysia as it is called), while English is taught only as a second language. English is thus passing through a transitional stage in the country at the moment:

there is still a relatively large section of the adult population who feel most at home in English, while younger ones are coming up for whom English will be but an auxiliary language. Moreover, in the context of the country as a whole, the use of, and exposure to, English is progressively reduced as Bahasa Malaysia correspondingly widens its sphere of use. This changing situation has inevitably affected English as it is used in Malaysia at the moment, and will undoubtedly affect it even more in the future as the percentage of near native-speakers of English dwindles to the point where they will cease to have any influence at all on the use of the language in the country. It will only be in the future, therefore, that the truly distinctive characteristics of English in Malaysia will become more visible.

2.0 Varieties of Malaysian English

Randolph Quirk has said: "... it seems quite natural in most societies for people to recognise two distinct degrees of community: the immediate, local, and familiar community on the one hand; and on the other, a wider and less familiar community to which one also belongs and beyond which begins the foreign world proper. Linguistically, these two degrees are marked by a local dialect and a speech-form which is not specifically regional and which may have an additional prestige." (Quirk 1968: p. 91)." This concept of local dialect and wider speech-form, or of high and low varieties (Ferguson 1959), is more relevant to a description of Malaysian English than the concept of formal and informal registers or that of written and spoken English. The local dialect is meant to be used mainly in speech and limited to conversation on everyday matters only with familiars who are also Malaysians, who can then be expected to share the same dialect. With non-Malaysians, it should be the wider speech-form which is used on all occasions, even in speech and in informal situations. The use of the local dialect often serves to establish a rapport between speaker and hearer while the wider speech-form would tend to distance the two. The wider speech-form is normally

used with Malaysians on a more formal level, whether in speech or in writing, and is usually learnt through formal instruction whereas the local dialect is picked up informally. The wider speech-form thus has a much wider sphere of use than the local dialect.

Most English-speaking Malaysians are in command of both these varieties of Malaysian English. As Tongue observes:

> Anyone who has been only a short time in these countries [i.e., Singapore and Malaysia] will have had the remarkable experience of listening to a speaker who has been conversing in near-native discourse suddenly switch to very informal ESM [i.e., the English of Singapore and Malaysia] when he speaks to someone familiar only with the sub-standard form [referred to as the local dialect in this paper], or chats on the telephone with an intimate friend. This is a dramatic incident - everything seems to change, including grammar, vocabulary, voice quality, pace of utterance, and even gestures. The sub-standard forms, it is interesting to note, are also picked up by foreigners who have been in the region for some time and used as 'intimacy signals' when conversing with their local friends. (1974: 11)

For the wider speech-form, which is the more prestigious form, Malaysians aim to model their language on an internationally prestigious dialect of English like standard British or American English. For the near native-speaker of English, the wider speech-form would be virtually indistinguishable from any other dialect of well-educated English, at least in its written form. The grammar, sentence structure, paragraphing, etc., would be common to all well-educated varieties of English. So would the vocabulary, barring a few localized borrowings from the contact languages in Malaysia. Any differences there might be would come in on the spoken level, with minor pronunciation variations, but none that would interfere with international intelligibility. For the local dialect, however, Malaysians imitate no one but themselves. The divergence from standard British or American English is therefore much greater than for the wider speech-form.

2.1 The Wider Speech-Form

On the level of vocabulary, even for the near native-speaker of English, there is the inevitable departure from other varieties of well-educated English due to the different life-style of this multicultural and multilingual country. Hence, there are loans from contact languages like Hindi (e.g. "dhobi" meaning "washerman, laundry"), Portuguese (e.g. "peon" meaning "office attendant"), Arabic (e.g. "syce" meaning "driver"), Tamil (e.g. "tamby" meaning "errand boy"), Chinese (e.g. "towkay" meaning "proprietor"), and Malay (e.g. "jaga" meaning "guard", "ulu" meaning "in the upper reaches of a river" in Malay but used to mean "in the wilds, out-of-the-way" in English). With Bahasa Malaysia now being the national language of the country, it is inevitable that many Malay words have been brought into Malaysian English, e.g. "bomoh" meaning a Malay medicine man, "selamat datang" meaning "welcome", "puasa" meaning "to fast", "Menteri Besar" meaning "Chief Minister", and "orang Asli" referring to the aboriginal peoples of Malaysia.

Apart from such loans, there are also words reflecting the colonial background of Malaysians. Thus, the term "shillings" is frequently used to refer to coins, although the local currency is in dollars and cents and was so even in the days of colonization, and to go "outstation" means to leave the place where one lives or is stationed, in order to visit other locations within the country, either on duty or on holiday.

Then there are other words which, although English in origin, may be used in ways unfamiliar to native speakers of English. Many foods are described as being either "heaty" or "cooling", reflecting concepts belonging to some Asian cultures. "Heaty" foods or drinks make the body hot, like brandy, beef, chilli, coffee, while those that are "cooling" have the opposite effect, like beer, certain vegetables and fruits. The terms "auntie" and "uncle" are used not only to express these particular family relationships but also as marks of respect in addressing those either superior or equal to the speaker on the social scale. Thus,

salespeople would use these terms to address their customers, servants would use these terms to address their employers (whereas in the past they used an equivalent of "boss" for this purpose), and individuals who do not know each other well enough to use their first names would use these terms to address each other. Children throughout Malaysia are taught to address most adults (with the exception of those considered very low on the social scale) as either "auntie" or "uncle" as marks of respect to them.

As far as the average educated Malaysian is concerned though, as distinct from the elite of the English-speaking population in the country, there are frequent instances of word-usage which are considered deviant from the point of view of the educated native-speaker of English but which nevertheless are gradually being propagated through sheer force of use and of numbers. An example of this is the use of the word "alphabet" to refer to "letter of the alphabet", thereby giving rise to the familiar plural form "alphabets", when "letters of the alphabet" are referred to. Other examples are the frequent confusion between the words "take/bring/send/fetch", "come/go", and "borrow/lend". "Follow" is often used in the sense of "accompany" and "chop" is used for "stamp" or "seal". These, and other such examples, are commonly found in the English used by average educated Malaysians, who are generally oblivious of the fact that such usage is considered deviant as far as standard British English is concerned.

On the level of pronunciation, the most striking instances of deviation from standard British English, as far as the wider speech-form is concerned, are in the matter of word-stress. While for the elite of the English-speaking population the standard British pattern of stress is in general adhered to, the average, and thus much more frequent, pronunciations of words such as those given below would place the primary stress differently, as indicated by underlining.

comment (noun)	faculty	competent	character
forfeit (noun)	bargain	colleague	carpenter
content (noun)	purchase	vehicle	literature
market	expert	context	inculcate
association	consider	realize	development
contributor	economic	committee	fascination
alternative	specific	illustrate	co-ordinator
presentation	familiar	technique	opportunity
individual	official	remedial	competition
determine	academic	significant	adolescence
issue	frivolous	assets	differ

While in the past educators might have attempted to bring these pronunciations in line with those of standard British English, such attempts have faded out now as many educators themselves use these same Malaysian pronunciations in their own wider speech-form. Moreover, the average educated Malaysian pronunciations of these words are internationally intelligbble on the whole, although it must be admitted that instances of misunderstanding are not always avoided.

On the level of structure or grammar, the wider speech-form variety of Malaysian English attempts to come as close to standard British English as the speaker is capable of. While there still exists a relatively small section of the English-speaking population whose wider speech-form may be indistinguishable from standard British English as far as structure or grammar is concerned, more and more deviations from that norm are being noted, indicative of the trend Malaysian English is now taking, following its role as auxiliary language of the nation. However, these deviations from standard British English on the level of grammar are still considered as aberrations at the moment, especially by English language educators, while many of those deviations on the level of vocabulary and pronunciation are not. In other words, while it is recognized by most Malaysians that certain vocabulary and pronunciation differences are allowed between

Malaysian English and standard British English, the general feeling is that there ought to be none as far as grammar is concerned. However, in spite of this, deviations on the ~~ak~~ level of grammar continue to flourish, and are now quite prevalent in average educated Malaysian English. Only a few of the more common grammatical deviations will be mentioned for purposes of illustration.

The problems that the average educated Malaysian has with the complex tense system of English are to be expected. Firstly, the selection of the correct tense, among the many tenses available in English, causes a lot of confusion in the minds of Malaysians used to the simple tense systems of their vernaculars. When does one choose the present perfect tense as opposed to the simple past tense or the past perfect tense? Or when does one choose the continuous tense as opposed to the simple tense? Even after the appropriate tense has been decided on, there is the difficulty of finding the correct forms with which to express it, for many of the more common verbs in English are irregular and must be learnt as such. Moreover, there is the problem of the "dummy auxiliary" "do/does/did" which, when it occurs, carries the tense of the verb phrase so that the main verb remains uninflected. Added to these problems is the fact that many of the modal auxiliaries in English express syntactic, but not temporal, tense so that it is easy enough to sympathize with the average Malaysian's dilemma in the choice between "will" and "would" and between "can" and "could" in expressions such as "He will/would try again" and "He can/could do it himself".

Another major area of difficulty for Malaysians is prepositional usage. Firstly, there are the prepositions used in idiomatic phrases and in phrasal verbs such as "to run up (a bill)" or "to hand in (an assignment)". Very often, Malaysians will use a different preposition from that used in standard British English, as in the expressions "with a view of", "superior than", "arrive to". In addition, there are instances of redundant prepositions, as in the examples "stressed on", "emphasized on", "continued on", "mentioned about", "discussed about", "demanded for", "requested for", "comprising of" and "combat against".

The uncountable nouns are often regularized as countable nouns and treated as such in average Malaysian usage. Thus, the following plurals are commonly found: "jewelleries", "mails", "sceneries", "informations", "equipments", "underwears", "machineries", "clothings" and so on. When such uncountable nouns are used in the singular, it is common enough to find expressions such as "an evidence", "an advice", and "a chalk". Moreover, Malaysians now generally use the determiners "many/much" and "few/less" quite indiscriminately with following nouns, whether these be countable or uncountable, giving rise to expressions such as "less problems" and "much books".

2.2 The Local Dialect

The local dialect is a much "barer" and more simplified variety of English than the wider speech-form. This can be seen, for example, in the vocabulary, which is quite limited and devoid of the richness of synonyms and near-synonyms to be expected of the wider speech-form. As a consequence of this, a number of words have to serve a variety of functions. Thus these words are given extensions of meaning not normally found in standard British English. One notable example is the use of the verbs "open" and "close". Malaysians "open" and "close" lights, fans, taps, radios, and TVs, while they also "open" (but do not "close") shoes and clothes, meaning, to take off these articles of clothing. Another example is the use of the verb "cut". It can be used to mean "overtake", as in the sentence "His car cut mine"; it can mean "to beat someone (in a competition)", as in the sentence "He cut me by only one mark"; and it can also be used in the sense of "reduce, deduct", as in the sentence "He cut me five dollars". Yet another example is the noun "friend", which is used to function as a verb too, as in the sentence commonly heard among school children, "He won't friend me".

On the level of pronunciation, this simplification process of the local dialect can be observed in the treatment of the consonant clusters of standard British English. This simplification usually takes one of two forms, either by omitting one or more of the consonants in the cluster (e.g. "depth" becomes "dep", "guests" becomes "gues", "risks" becomes "ris", "desks" becomes "des") or by inserting a vowel into the consonant cluster, thus breaking it up into two syllables (e.g. "film" becomes "filem" and "little" becomes "littel"). The "th" sound is often replaced by "t" when it is voiceless (e.g. "thread" becomes "tread", "three" becomes "tree", "think" becomes "tink", "thought" becomes "taught") and by "d" when it is voiced (e.g. "this" becomes "dis", "though" becomes "dough", and "that" becomes "dat").

On the whole, the characteristic Malaysian "accent" tends to be exaggerated in the local dialect as this is the variety of English which most Malaysians feel belongs to them and forms a part of their identity. Hence they are not bound by any anxieties over external standards of correctness. Moreover, it is common enough to find the English of the local dialect interspersed with words and phrases from vernaculars like Cantonese and Malay, not only in those contexts where English lacks a word for a native idea or concept, but also in those contexts where an English word is perfectly accessible, appropriate and suitable. Such a juxtaposition of two entirely different languages undoubtedly has an effect on the pronunciation of both the languages involved.

The "basic" form of the local dialect can be seen also in the grammar, which is essentially a more simplified and reduced version of the wider speech-form, the process of simplification being that of maintaining what is essential for communication purposes and dropping nearly everything else. The simplifications to be found vary greatly with the speaker and the context. A few members of the English-speaking population may disdain to use too many simplifications in their local dialect whereas at the other end of the scale, those with only a rudimentary knowledge of English are forced to use the maximum number of simplifications possible. The local dialect of the average Malaysian, however, often dispenses with grammatical

features like subject-verb agreement, the use of the copula, grammatical and 'empty' subjects and objects like "it", and many of the inflections of the various parts of speech. The complex tense system of standard British English is largely ignored, and tense is left to be communicated either by the context alone or through the use of "time" words and phrases like "last night", "yesterday", "Friday" and so on. One common question tag, "isn't it?", suffices for all types of structures, regardless of the subject and verb used in the main sentence, e.g. "Just flowers, isn't it?", "She was quite young, isn't it?", and "You're not doing anything now, isn't it?". Another common and simple way of inviting affirmation (or negation) in the local dialect is to attach the phrase "or not?" to a preceding utterance, e.g. "Can or not?", "Coming or not?", and "Watch TV last night or not?".

Still on the level of grammar, the local dialect, perhaps surprisingly enough, retains most of the complex personal pronoun system of standard British English, with the interesting exception of the possessive forms "mine", "yours", "his", "hers", "ours", and "theirs", which are generally replaced by "my one", "your one", "his one", "her one", "our one" and "their one" respectively, e.g. "My one is better than your one". This use of "one" is also found with the demonstrative pronouns "this" and "that", which occur in the local dialect as "this one" and "that one" respectively.

What is most characteristic of the local dialect, however, is the use of what Tongue has called "fillers" (1974:83), a term used to indicate those items of language which communicate no particular denotative meaning but which are used to indicate emotive, affective attitudes of the speaker, or sometimes simply to "fill" a pause or a moment of hesitation or reflection in the stream of speech. The most well-known of these fillers is "lah". To quote from Tongue: "The range of meanings it possesses is prodigious; depending upon the way it is pronounced, it can function as an intensifying particle, as a marker of informal style, as a signal of intimacy, for persuading, deriding, wheedling, rejecting and a host of other purposes (pp. 114-5)." Other common

fillers are "ah", "what", "one" and "man". It might appear strange that a dialect which is in general characterized by simplification and reduction should also be so impregnated with fillers which do not contribute to essential communication at all. It could be hypothesized here that it is precisely because of the reduction found in the local dialect that fillers have to be resorted to, in order to make up for some of the deficiencies as it were, but this can be no more than just a suggestion until further research is carried out into this very interesting aspect of Malaysian English. Some examples of the use of these fillers in the local dialect are given below:

Can't remember his name man.
Too late to save money lah.
I can do it what.
He can sing one.
You like it ah?
What for want to disturb man?
Why not you come ah?
He go there first one.
Come on lah, let's go.
You very clever what.

2.3 Trends in Malaysian English

As was asserted earlier in this paper, Malaysia is passing through a transitional stage as far as the position of English in the country is concerned. At the moment there are still sufficient numbers of the English-speaking population who tolerate no deviation from standard British English in their wider speech-form, least of all on the level of grammar. All the rules for "correct", prestigious English are adhered to closely, whether these are essential to basic communication or not. As is to be expected, more is demanded of writing than of speech in the matter of adherence to the rules of standard English grammar. However, as has been pointed out in this paper, many instances of what might have been considered aberrations in the use of English in the past are now laying strong claim

to recognition as the norm in the present-day role of English in Malaysia, as these instances of deviation from standard British English increase in frequency in the language of professionals like university and college educators, lawyers, journalists, etc. Though they still attempt to use "correct" English, yet inadequate knowledge of what this "correct" English consists of and inadequate exposure to this type of English result in the many deviations which are met with everyday even in the educated use of the language. As such, there is quite a lot of tolerance for "aberrations" in the language, even in the wider speech-form, as far as the majority of English-speaking Malaysians are concerned. "Aberrations" are usually tolerated and overlooked as long as they do not interfere too greatly with communication purposes. This greater tolerance has come about in recent years as more and more English-speaking Malaysians are themselves less and less sure about just what the "correct" forms should be, and because more and more of these "aberrations" are being found in the language of those who can be considered to set the standard for English in the country. It is only in the English language classroom that such "aberrations", especially in grammar, are subject to correction, but much of this loses its effectiveness as more often than not the teachers themselves are no models for the "correct" English contained in the textbook or required by the syllabus.

This greater tolerance is tending to lead to a wider speech-form which is distinct from educated native-speaker English, be it British or American, phonologically, grammatically and lexically, a wider speech-form which incorporates a number of the features of the local dialect into it. This comes about as the wider speech-form is more and more localized and nativized, freed, as it were, from the constraints of standard British English within the country. At the present, indications of this can be observed in the spoken mode as many Malaysians seem to feel quite free to incorporate features of the local dialect into their wider speech-form, for all purposes in speech, formal or informal, with Malaysians or non-Malaysians. This incursion of the local dialect into the

spheres of use normally belonging to the wider speech-form can be seen as the result of the fact that native-speaker-type English is beginning to feel more and more like a foreign language to the average educated Malaysian, whereas the local dialect is considered to be indigenous to the country. There will probably still be a speech continuum even in the future, ranging from a pidginized variety of English at the very bottom to near native-speaker proficiency at the very top. However, while there may possibly still be an elite at or near the top of the speech continuum, the average use of English will be somewhat short of this target, though just how far short it will be must be left to be observed and described as the distinctive character of Malaysian English becomes more visible in the future.

3.0 "Utilitarian" English in Malaysia

The preceding section has shown that several factors in Malaysia have affected and are continuing to affect the role and character of English as it is used in the country. While the factors mentioned so far have come about naturally, as it were, as a result of the context of English in the country, deliberate education policy in the schools actively encourages this trend as it now focuses on the utilitarian aspects of English, neglecting its stylistic and esthetic features. This emphasis is due to the realization that, with Bahasa Malaysia taking over from English as the primary language of the country, there would not be sufficient time nor opportunity (nor would it be necessary) to teach English "in its entirety", as was attempted in the past. Indicative of this change in the role of English in the country is the new English Language syllabus recently introduced by the Ministry of Education for use in Forms 4 and 5 of Malaysian schools (that is, the 10th and 11th years of formal education, which begins at age six). Called the Communicational syllabus, it states:

> The syllabus specifies a number of language products, and suggests strategies for realising these products. While specifying the product, it does not lay down the maximum or minimum level to be reached. For all ~~practical~~ practical purposes, the minimum level is simply where the communicational intents is successfully conveyed, irrespective of the linguistic finesse. The maximum level is, of course, native speaker ability. The focus of attention is on whether the student manages to communicate, how effectively he does so, and how he can improve on the communication skills that he has. (1975:4)

The essence of the new syllabus, therefore, is communication, never mind correct grammar, syntax or style.

It is therefore now declared Government policy to treat and view English as a utilitarian language, a tool to be used instead of an object to be admired. However, no teacher is asked to teach this utilitarian English, for there is no description or grammar or textbook available for it. Moreover, the English language syllabus in use up to the Form 3 level is structural, teaching the finer points of English grammar like correct subject-verb agreement, the whole range of English tenses, and the correct use of determiners. Hence teachers are asked to do no more than allow this utilitarian-type English to be used by those students who can do no better, and accept their utterances which, even though they may not conform to the standards of native-speaker English, nevertheless achieve their basic instrumental function of communication.

4.0 Pedagogical Implications

The foregoing account leads to the question of whether or not a utilitarian-type English should be that variety of English taught in the schools, rather than educated native-speaker English. If it is, then many problems arise. Firstly, such a utilitarian-type English has yet to be devised or discovered or described. Thus there are practically no materials available for the language teacher to use; there are no texts and no descriptive grammars of this type of functional English. However,

if, somehow, it was agreed upon that this utilitarian-type English should be that variety of English taught in the schools, then the necessary grammars and textbooks would probably be forthcoming. But the problem then remains of what to do with the few who will need to know native-speaker-type English, even in the future. It would not be pedagogically sound to have them unlearn many of the rules of their utilitarian English in order to re-learn the rules of native-speaker English. The ideal, of course, is for them to expand their grammars to accommodate the fuller forms of native-speaker English, but it would be extremely difficult to discover a utilitarian English which is at the same time amenable to expansion in the course of further learning, if necessary.

The other alternative, which appears to be that found in Malaysia at the moment, is still to adopt native-speaker-type English as that variety to be taught in formal instruction. The materials are available for this, and this will also cater for those who will, for some reason or other, either want to, or need to, know native-speaker-type English. The usual objection to this is that this alternative would involve too much wastage of valuable time and resources, in teaching the finer aspects of English which few will absorb and actually use, in the situations in which they normally find themselves. If we teach a utilitarian-type English (rather than merely allowing it to occur), so the argument goes, then will we not be able to make more effective use of the time available to us? Anyway, the proponents of utilitarian English might say, the efforts at teaching native-speaker English all these years have not proved too successful at all.

Arguments can be levelled against the choice of either a utilitarian-type of English or native-speaker English as the variety of English to be taught in the country. However, it would appear that more can be said against actively propagating (instead of merely allowing and accepting) utilitarian English as the target of language instruction instead of adopting native-speaker standards even while realizing that many will fall short of these standards, and naturally so. As a teaching goal,

therefore, the aim should probably continue to be educated native-speaker English as far as possible (remembering the auxiliary role of English in the country). However, educators everywhere should be ready to be more tolerant of structures and utterances which do not measure up to native-speaker standards but which still manage to communicate nevertheless. This goal of native-speaker English as the target does not necessarily conflict with the account already given in the earlier sections of this paper of the factors which are affecting the role and character of English in Malaysia. Teachers and all others involved with English instruction in the country should be led to realize that, with perhaps most of the students learning English, there will inevitably be a gap between the target language and what is actually learnt, due to the factors affecting the role and character of English in the country. However, this would at least allow some students to go beyond mere utilitarian English, if they have the capability for this, and there will be a need for a small group of elite, as it were, of English speakers in the country, even in the future, to form the nucleus of English language education in Malaysia.

Moreover, this strategy would also expose the majority of students to native-speaker-type English which, though it might appear in the productive competence of only a handful of students, yet should lodge more readily in their receptive competence of English. This would mean that while the majority of English users in the country might not be able to produce native-speaker-type English in their speech and writing, they ~~will~~ should at least be able to comprehend it when they encounter it, in their reading and listening. The adoption of native-speaker English as the target of English language instruction in Malaysia will therefore provide the necessary link between average educated Malaysian English and native-speaker English. While these two varieties of the language will not be entirely identical, yet mutual intelligibility on the whole would be ensured if the speakers of a more utilitarian-type English will also be

able to understand native-speaker English (through having been exposed to it) and the users of native-speaker English will be able to understand utilitarian-type English (without needing formal instruction in and previous exposure to it). This latter type of comprehension is probably more dependent on language filtering processes which seem to be inbuilt in everybody, as witness, for example, the ability of adults to communicate with children who are still in the process of learning the language. However, when the two parties involved are not adult and child but adult and adult, one who uses native-speaker English and the other a utilitarian-type English, then understanding between the two, and especially that by the native-speaker of the utilitarian-type of English, is dependent more on correct attitudes of willingness to understand and acceptance of variations. It has often been remarked that a person who chooses not to understand will never understand, while one who tries to understand will usually do so. How these "correct attitudes" are to be taught or learnt is not too clear at the moment.

5.0 Conclusion

It would not be incorrect to describe English as belonging now to the entire English-speaking world, and not only to those people who use it as their native language. The realization of this fact should serve to point out to native-speakers of English that there are other varieties of English besides theirs which are used in the world today, and that no longer can everyone in the English-speaking world be expected or required to use standard British or American English. The English-speaking world can no longer be regarded as monolithic. The existence of regional standards and nonnative varieties in English must be recognised and accepted by English users everywhere. Thus English courses everywhere, in native-speaker as well as in nonnative-speaker environments, should expose students to varieties of English other than standard British or American English or the regional standard of English as found in each particular country, for purposes of comprehension, though not of production.

With greater tolerance and acceptance of the diversity of peoples and cultures and their own varieties of English, we can go a long way toward mutual intelligibility. At the same time, nonnative-speakers of English should never be made to feel ashamed of their own variety of the language, no matter how deviant it may be from the point of view of native-speaker English. While everybody should never cease to strive to better his or her own language ability, native-speaker as well as nonnative-speaker, the nonnative-speaker's interlanguage (which may become fossilized and not develop any further) is yet another contribution to the richness and diversity that make up what is called English.

References

1. Bickley, V. Cultural aspects of language imposition in Malaya, Singapore, and Indonesia. Topics in Culture Learning, 1973, 1, 86-98.

2. Ferguson, C. Diglossia. Word, 1959, 15, 325-340.

3. Killingley, S. A Phonological, grammatical, and lexical description of Malayan English. Unpublished M. A. dissertation, University of Malaya, 1965.

4. Ministry of Education, Malaysia. Teachers' Handbook for the post-1970 primary school English syllabus (items 1-64). Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 1971.

5. Ministry of Education, Malaysia. English language syllabus in Malaysian schools, tingkatan 4 - 5. Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 1975.

6. Quirk, R. The use of English. Longman, 1968.

7. Tongue, R. The English of Singapore and Malaysia. Eastern Universities Press, 1974.