

School of Education

YOUNG MALAYSIANS' BLOGGING HABITS AND A LINGUISTIC ANALYSIS OF THEIR USE OF ENGLISH IN THEIR WEBLOGS

Ruth Ong Lok Tik

Thesis submitted to the University of Nottingham, United Kingdom

for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

May 2016

Abstract

The size of the blogosphere has long been a contentious issue amongst people researching the social media as it cannot be accurately determined. Bodies (BlogPulse, BlogScope, Technorati, etc.) which used to track the growing phenomenon across the world were careful with their choice of words when reporting on its size, such as Sifry's Technorati report which said, "On July 31, 2006, Technorati tracked its 50 millionth blog" (Sifry, 2006, August 6). However, as Rosenberg (2006, August 9) points out, "… it doesn't really matter. There's still a revolution going on."

This 'revolution' is dominated by young people and in Malaysia, it was found that 74% of the bloggers in Malaysia were below 25 years old (Windows Live Spaces, 2006) but there is limited study on the phenomenon of casual blogging amongst this age group in Malaysia and the use of English in the blogs. The current study contributes to this body of literature, drawing from works on blogging, linguistic analysis, identity, and varieties of English. It adopts the social-constructivist framework and postulates that blogging is a social action which causes the blogosphere to be in a state of constant revision where "individuals create their own subjective meanings of their experiences through interactions with each other and their surrounding environment" (Hartas, 2010:44).

This study used mixed methods in order to answer the research questions using three instruments: survey, interview, and weblog analysis to yield the data needed to investigate the content and interactive blog communication of selected young Malaysian casual bloggers who blog in English. The survey data yielded information about their blogging habits and content; the interview data yielded information about their language learning endeavours which influenced their choice of language or varieties of language in their blogs; and the in-depth analysis of one blog yielded information on how language was used in the blog to achieve communicative intent. The findings reveal the blogging habits of young Malaysian bloggers, and how their attitude towards their identity as Malaysians using English and socio-cultural factors influence their choice of language and/or varieties of English in their blog communication. It discovers the unconventional manner of using an existing language to achieve communicative intent among those in the same blogospheric region. This study makes both the bloggers and their blog texts the focus of its research.

Acknowledgements

Many thanks to students in my TCEA1305 Sem II 2006/2007 class who sparked my interest to study blogs and for subsequently participating in the pilot study. I also thank the participants of my research and especially Ocean who have provided much valuable data without which this dissertation would not have existed. Thank you, Ocean, for also patiently verifying the analysis of the data.

My PhD journey was filled with potholes of sorts and it would not have ended at its intended destination without the very generous guidance and patience of all my supervisors. To the late Associate Prof Dr Richard Pemberton, your unwavering belief in me despite the obstacles faced gave me the courage to go on. I thank you from the deepest recesses of my heart. Your kindness and the generosity of your time are remembered. My gratitude also goes to Dr Anne Convery, who continued the work of Richard, and to Assoc Prof Dr Stefanie Pillai, my Malaysian supervisor, both who painstakingly went through my drafts and gave much valuable comments and support along the way and right till the end. I wouldn't have been able to see this to completion without the both of you. I would also like to thank Assoc Prof Dr Rajeswary Sargunan who supervised me for a short stint before she retired. Thanks for showing me how to prepare conference presentations without stress.

I also thank kind academics, Prof Svend Brinkmann and Dr Dave Hiles who replied to my queries and responded with advice and articles for me to refer to. I appreciate it. My thanks also go to Dr Lean Mei Li who generously gave her time to examine the analysis of my raw data with the aim of verifying my analysis of data.

To my husband, Ivan, who was my scratching pole and a shoulder to lean on, thank you. It has been a challenging time for both of us. To my son, Ian, who played on his own whenever he saw Mommie working at the computer, thank you, darling. The desire to do more things with you before you got too old for them motivated me to complete my dissertation.

This journey could not have been possible without the financial aid and time off from my employers, the Ministry of Higher Education in Malaysia, University of Malaya, and the Faculty of Languages and Linguistics. Thank you.

Finally, though we all make choices, it is God who arranges our steps. I thank God for the whole journey and for all the people who have made it possible; friends, fellow research students, colleagues, lecturers and support staff, especially Jacqueline Stevenson, who have continuously provided much needed administrative help and kind advice. Thank you. To God be the glory.

Table of Contents

FIGURES AND TABLES 7

TERMS AND DEFINITIONS 9

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION 13

1.0 INTRODUCTION 13

1.1 FOCUS OF THE STUDY 20

1.2 METHODOLOGY 22

1.3 THESIS OUTLINE 24

1.4 SUMMARY OF CHAPTER ONE 25

CHAPTER 2: THE MALAYSIAN CONTEXT 26

2.0 INTRODUCTION 26

2.1 ENGLISH IN MALAYSIA 27

2.2 MALAYSIAN ENGLISH AS A VARIETY OF ENGLISH 35

2.3 MALAYSIAN ENGLISH AND THE INTERNET 55

2.4 THE MALAYSIAN BLOGOSPHERE 58

2.5 SUMMARY OF CHAPTER TWO 61

CHAPTER 3: BLOGGING 62

3.0 INTRODUCTION 62

3.1 WEBLOGS AND BLOGGING 63

3.2 IDENTITY AND LANGUAGE USE 76

3.3 INTERNET LANGUAGE 90

3.4 SUMMARY OF CHAPTER THREE 101

CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY 103

4.0 INTRODUCTION 103

4.1 PHILOSOPHICAL PERSPECTIVES 103

4.2 Research Premise 109
4.3 Rationale for Choice of Data Collection Methods 110
4.4 Methodology for Data Analysis 121
4.5 Pilot Tests 131
4.6 Observing Ethical Protocol 137
4.7 Summary of Chapter Four 138

CHAPTER 5: DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS - SURVEY RESULTS 139

5.0 Introduction 139
5.1 Survey Results 141
5.2 Summary of Chapter Five 166

CHAPTER 6: DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS - QUALITATIVE INTERVIEWS AND NARRATIVES 168

6.0 Analysis of Qualitative Interviews and Narratives 168
6.1 Ezdude's Story 171
6.2 Camin's Story 181
6.3 Limau's Story 190
6.4 Ocean's Story 199
6.5 Summary of Findings from the Qualitative Interviews 219
6.6 Summary of Chapter Six 240

CHAPTER 7: DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS - BLOG DATA 241

7.0 Analysis of Blog Data 241
7.1 Communication Strategies 243
7.2 Expectation of Prior Knowledge or Tacit Information 308
7.3 Summary of Chapter Seven 316

CHAPTER 8: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION 317

8.0 Introduction 317
8.1 RQ1: What are the blogging practices of young Malaysian bloggers? 318
8.2 RQ2: How are they using this medium of communication? 322

8.3 RQ3: How do they use English in their blogs? 324
8.4 Other Findings 328
8.5 The Social Media of Malaysia today and Suggestions for Further Research 336
8.6 Conclusion 338
REFERENCES 341

FIGURES AND TABLES

Figure 1.1: Age Categories on the *Worldwide Web*

Figure 2.1: Three Main Varieties of Malaysian English
Figure 2.2: Features of Sociolects of Malaysian English
Figure 2.3: The Malaysian English Continuum
Figure 2.4: Model of Malaysian English Varieties and Malaysian Speakers of English

Figure 4.1: Coding chart for blog analysis
Figure 4.2: Blog analysis – coding the raw data
Figure 4.3: Categorization of language features in the blog
Figure 4.4: Lasswell's Model of Communication
Figure 4.5: Data collection methods to answer RQs

Figure 5.1: Description of all the participants of the study
Figure 5.2: Respondents' language learning status
Figure 5.3: Languages which respondents were confident in using
Figure 5.4: L1 and L2 respondents' blogging status
Figure 5.5: L1 and L2 current bloggers' blogging languages
Figure 5.6: Reasons for starting a blog (current bloggers)
Figure 5.7: Reasons for starting a blog (former bloggers)
Figure 5.8: Frequency of blogging (current & former bloggers)
Figure 5.9: Duration of each blogging activity (current & former bloggers)
Figure 5.10: What they blog about
Figure 5.11: Topics of the interviewees' blog entries
Figure 5.12: Considerations made when writing a blog entry for posting
Figure 5.13: Type of editing done to writing before posting
Figure 5.14: Type of help used when editing writing (L1 & L2)
Figure 5.15: Considerations made when constructing blog comments
Figure 5.16: Type of editing done to comments before posting
Figure 5.17: Type of help used when editing comments (L1 & L2)
Figure 5.18: Why the bloggers stopped blogging

Figure 6.1: L1 users' language background and language output
Figure 6.2: Ocean's Language Use Situation in the Workplace
Figure 6.3: Sample comment 1
Figure 6.4: Sample comment 2
Figure 6.5: Ocean's Language Use Situations
Figure 6.6: Position of the English Language in the Lives of the Participants
Figure 6.7: The Labels used by the Participants to Describe the ME Varieties

Figure 7.1: Details of the entries and comments in the three periods of Ocean's blog writing
Figure 7.12: Inconsistent capitalization
Figure 7.13: Using the Uppercase for Emphasis
Figure 7.14: Using the Uppercase as an Urgent Attention Getter
Figure 7.15: Emotive representations (text-based emoticons) in Ocean's blog
Figure 7.16: Emotive representations (action words) in Ocean's blog
Figure 7.17: A combination of emotive representations in one comment
Figure 7.18: Repetitive letters used to express emotions
Figure 7.19: Emotive representations (punctuations and symbols) in Ocean's blog
Figure 7.20: A sample of onomatopoeic words used in context in Ocean's blog
Figure 7.21: Use of onomatopoeic words in Ocean's blog
Figure 7.22a: Sample 1 - Romanized code-mixing with cultural connotations

Figure 7.22b: Sample 2 - Romanized code-mixing with cultural connotations
Figure 7.22c: Sample 3 - Romanized code-mixing with cultural connotations
Figure 7.23a: Code-mixing to convey a more intense message
Figure 7.23b: Code-mixing to reduce the force of the message
Figure 7.24: Conformation of the English syntax in non-English words
Figure 7.25: Perverted/Hamsap (reproduced from Strip #1761, http://www.oldmasterq.com)
Figure 7.26: Code-mixing to convey meaning in its entirety
Figure 7.27: Romanized words with English translation provided
Figure 7.28a: Use of the original code from the source language (Sample 1)
Figure 7.28b: Use of the original code from the source language (Sample 2)
Figure 7.28c: Use of the original code from the source language (Sample 3)
Figure 7.28d: Use of the original code from the source language (Sample 4)
Figure 7.28e: Use of the original code from the source language (Sample 5)
Figure 7.28f: Use of the original code from the source language (Sample 6)
Figure 7.29: Code-mixing - original code (Chinese) from the source language
Figure 7.30: Literal translation from the source language
Figure 7.31a: Code-switching as a strategy (Chinese characters)
Figure 7.31b: Code-switching as a strategy (Romanized Cantonese)
Figure 7.32a: Different ways of writing 'laugh out loud' as an initialism
Figure 7.32b: Samples of initialisms from the corpus
Figure 7.32c: Use of an acronym for brevity and speed
Figure 7.32d: Truncation of words
Figure 7.33a: Informal contractions – want to vs wanna
Figure 7.33b: Informal contractions – kind of vs kinda
Figure 7.33c: Informal contractions – don't know vs dunno
Figure 7.34a: The exclamation – *choi*
Figure 7.34b: The interjection – *eh*
Figure 7.34c: Onomatopoeic interjections
Figure 7.35a: The particle *lah*
Figure 7.35b: The particle *de*
Figure 7.35c: Other non-English particles from the corpus
Figure 7.36a: Non-English particles as positive question words
Figure 7.36b: The particle *huh* as the question word 'What'
Figure 7.36c: The particle *lorr* as a question tag
Figure 7.36d: The particle *meh* in negative question forms
Figure 7.36e: The particle *meh* in positive question forms
Figure 7.36f: Non-English particle and question word combination in forming questions
Figure 7.37: Omission of non-content words
Figure 7.38a: The use of 'got'
Figure 7.38b: The use of 'then'
Figure 7.38c: The use of 'one' (or *wan* and 1)
Figure 7.38d: The use of 'already' (or *d*, *dy* and *adi*)
Figure 7.38e: The use of 'also', 'can also' and 'also can'
Figure 7.38f: The use of 'last time'
Figure 7.38g: The use of 'follow' and 'bring'
Figure 7.39: Wh-word at the end of sentences
Figure 7.40a: Expectation of prior knowledge – level 1
Figure 7.40b: Expectation of prior knowledge – level 2
Figure 7.40c: Expectation of prior knowledge – level 3
Figure 7.40d: Messages in comments which failed to be conveyed

TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

The discussion of varieties of English and its varied functions in this dissertation uses acronyms which require explanations. A short glossary of terms as used in this dissertation and part of which is taken from Crystal's list (2003:108), is therefore provided and listed in alphabetical order.

ASE: American Standard English

BME: (Broken Malaysian English): The spoken variety of Malaysian English at the basilectal level.

CME (Colloquial Malaysian English): The spoken variety of Malaysian English at the mesolectal level. This variety is commonly used in informal oral interactions and informal daily transactions among Malaysians and is frequently known as *Manglish*.

EME: Educated Malaysian English (or the acrolectal variety).

ENL (English as a Native Language) >> **MT** (Mother Tongue) >> **L1** (First Language): The language first acquired by a child or preferred in a multilingual situation. The latter context may not be identical to the former: for example, the children of many European emigrants to the USA have come to use English as a first language in the latter sense, though it is not their mother tongue.

However, these three concepts are not easily definable because of the different circumstances and factors that birth them. For example, ENL, MT,

and L1 are similar yet different and attempts to redefine them were made to "go beyond features like ancestral languages, ethnicity, dialectal variation, geographical location and nationality" (Pillai, 2006:64). This is to take into account children who acquire the language in a multilingual and multi-ethnic society where "factors such as migration, mixed marriages, multiculturalism and language shift" need to be considered in giving a definition (Pillai, 2006:64). There is also the distinction made between native speakers and native users by some scholars who state that native speakers are native users but native users are not necessarily native speakers (Davies, 2003), taking into consideration their geographical and ancestral background.

ESL (English as a Second Language): English in countries where it holds special status as a medium of communication (Crystal, 2003:107). The term has also been applied to the English of immigrants and other foreigners who live within a country where English is the first language.

ESP (English for Specific Purposes): A course whose content is determined by the professional needs of the learner. It contrasts with *English for General Purposes*, where the aim is to establish a general level of proficiency. Several areas have been recognized, such as *English for Academic Purposes* (**EAP**) and *English for Science and Technology* (**EST**).

L1: In this thesis, it refers to English learnt as a first language and English learnt from birth. However, in some literature, L1 does not necessarily mean English learnt from birth (see Pillai, 2008).

L2: English learnt as a second language, is not a person's mother tongue, but used in order to meet a communicative need. In Malaysia, English is officially designated as a second language.

L3: English learnt as a third language.

MEI: Malaysian English Type I (the acrolectal variety)

MEII: Malaysian English Type II (the mesolectal variety)

NNL (Non-native Language): A language which people use other than their mother tongue.

NS (Native Speaker of English): Traditionally refers to the first diaspora of English speakers. The term 'native' conjures the image of originality and therefore prestige. Hence, it is common to find NS being given greater prestige both by themselves and by L2 learners (Giles & Powesland, 1975). Like ENL, MT, and L1, this concept has been the subject of much debate as the criteria that used to describe NS is no longer adequate because of the changed circumstances in which English is acquired.

SBE: (Standard British English): The variety of the English language that is generally used in professional writing in Britain and taught in British schools. It is also the variety that was taught to colonized nations.

SingE: (Singapore English): The variety of English spoken in Singapore at the acrolectal level and seen more as a *native* variety (Platt & Weber, 1980).

SME: (Standard Malaysian English): The variety of Malaysian English at the acrolectal level that is substantially uniform with respect to spelling, grammar, pronunciation, and vocabulary, well established by usage in the formal speech and writing of the educated in Malaysia.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

Malaysia is a multi-ethnic, multicultural, and multilingual country made up of three main ethnic groups and many other indigenous groups, each with their own language systems. As such, English used for communication in a country where at least 13 languages are spoken by the three main ethnic groups is considerably influenced by the cultural linguistic contexts. This gives rise to 'institutionalised' varieties of English (Kachru, 1992), reflecting the Malaysian people's multicultural experiences in the country. Malaysian English (ME) encompasses not only one variety but the full continuum of varieties spoken by Malaysians from the pidgins used by hawkers to the ones used by academics which the majority of Malaysians understand (Gaudart, 2000).

Knowledge and perpetuation of these varieties have been accelerated by modern technological communications such as blogging. An asynchronous computer-mediated communication (CMC), blogging has become a huge phenomenon in societies across the world as a communication tool to connect individuals from all age groups and among groups of people with similar interests. Blogs free writers from having to keep track of who they have informed about happenings in their life as the 'time-place independent' feature (Hutchings, 2002:88) provides a flexible mode of interaction for bloggers to connect with fellow bloggers and readers.

Through the speed in which what is written is published online, blogs and other technological communications have imposed changes to the English language through the way the language is used. As Ch'ien (2008:51) concurs, "in the twenty-first century, technology has been the driving force of English proliferation". The influence of such a style of using the English language is pervasive especially among young people who are fuelled by the desire to identify themselves with the blogging community. They are especially flexible in producing or coining new terms or new meanings which they see as being creative and innovative, but which language conservatives would call a distortion of the language. Such innovations which are sometimes driven by time constraints in blogging give rise to truncated words through irregular spelling (don't want = dowan; or not = onot, used particularly by but not restricted to ME users), use of letters which sound the same as the words they represent (and = n; you = u), removal of capitalization (I = i), and other irregular features of the language, adding to the varieties of English that we have to date. Ch'ien points out that "the computer and the computerized subjectivity now make urban culture available to everyone, and the universal language is a combination of icons, words and characters" (Ch'ien, 2008:52). However, she also questions the status of the written language and how it will be used in the twenty-first century, given the global and digital environment that we are in today. It is a pertinent question as the evidence of unconventional English that is used today in media other than the formal print media is so diversified and 'weird', especially amongst the younger generation who are computer and Internet savvy. The oral-like language used in writing

text messages and Microsoft Network (MSN) chats that also proliferate in blogs is made possible by the global transmission that is available through technological advancement. Coupled with the spirit of creativity of young people who had so long been subject to the strict rules of English usage, this power over the use of English on their own terms and according to their own rules has exploded into an entirely new way of communicating that allows their voices to be heard and in the way with which they are comfortable. The monopoly of the cyberspace by the young and the way in which the cyber-technology works to their advantage has hastened the acceptance and usage of such language, thereby democratizing English.

A *Windows Live Spaces* (2006) survey found the blogging scenario in Malaysia to be overwhelmingly dominated by young people with 74% of active bloggers made up of youngsters aged 24 years and below, and 21% between the ages of 25 and 34 years old. Being more technologically savvy than other age groups and ever willing to try out new things, young Malaysians take to blogging more quickly than others not only as a way to communicate with friends but also to have their writing instantly published and accessed across the globe. However, although it has already become a popular means of social communication and networking, and has a huge following among the young, there are limited studies on how young bloggers in this part of the world are using their blogs, what their blogs mean to them, and how they are writing their blogs.

The study of the Malaysian blogosphere is even more intriguing as the multi-ethnic, multilingual, and multicultural groups which make up

Malaysia mean that their blog writing is not homogenous and bears features of their respective languages and cultural backgrounds although they are written in English. The blog writers' ethnic or cultural identities are identifiable in their blog writing which sometimes reflect their spoken languages. Being a multi-ethnic population, most Malaysians speak at least two languages. The main languages spoken in Malaysia are *Bahasa Malaysia* which is the Malay language, Chinese languages, and Indian languages especially Tamil (Talbot, 1989). These are the languages of the [1]three main ethnic groups that make up Malaysia.

Almost every Malaysian in Malaysia speaks the Malay language, be it the official standard variety taught in schools or the colloquial variety used in the street in every day life as it is the national language. Besides Malay, many Malaysians also speak English which is the second language taught in schools and which is also used in every day life (refer to Section 2.1.2). Besides these two languages, Malaysians use different languages or varieties of languages depending on the region they come from and their educational background. Malaysian Chinese who have undergone a Chinese-medium education can speak Mandarin besides other Chinese languages which are locally known as the Chinese dialects. Malaysian Indians, one of the three main ethnic groups in Malaysia, may speak Indian

[1] The Malaysian population is made up of three main ethnic groups: Malays (50.1%), Chinese (22.6%), Indians (6.7%) and other minority groups such as the various indigenous groups (11.8%), others (0.7%), and non-citizens (8.2%) (2010 est.). The languages spoken are: Malay or Bahasa Malaysia (official), English, Chinese (Mandarin, Cantonese, Hokkien, Hakka, Hainan, Foochow), Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam, Panjabi, and Thai (CIA World Factbook, 2015).

languages such as Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam, and Hindi. The minority indigenous groups in Malaysia also speak their own heritage languages such as Iban, Kadazan, and Dusun languages besides Malay and English which they learn at school. All the languages in their repertoire mean that Malaysians are able to [2]code-mix and [3]code-switch as a communicative strategy depending on who their interactants are, their relationship with their interactants, and the message which they want to convey.

So although the *Windows Live Spaces* (2006) survey indicated that young Malaysians dominate the Malaysian blogosphere, their use of varieties of English in their blog writing is not the same and bears the features of their respective language backgrounds. Coupled with a desire to portray their Malaysian identity through their writing, how and what they write warrant investigation and this is the main focus of the study.

In this section, the background context of the study has been outlined and a brief explanation of why it is relevant to study the blog writing of young Malaysian bloggers is given. The next sub-section explains why 18 to 25 year olds were chosen to represent this age group in the context of

---

[2] Code-mixing refers to any admixture of linguistic elements of two or more language systems in the same utterance at various levels: phonological, lexical, grammatical and orthographical (Ho, 2007), 'such that a third, new code merges in which elements from the two languages are incorporated into a structurally definable pattern' (Maschler, 1998:125). Generally, code-mixing is seen as occurring beneath the clause level while code-switching occurs above the clause level.

[3] Code-switching is the common term for alternative use of two or more languages within the same discourse. "The juxtaposition within the same speech exchange of passages of speech belonging to two different grammatical systems or subsystems" (Gumperz, 1982). Switching takes many forms such as alternating between sentences, beginning in one language and finishing in another, phrases from both languages succeeding each other (Crystal, 2010).

Malaysia as different disciplines interpret the term 'young adult' differently.

Defining 'Young'

The term 'young adult' holds different interpretations in different fields and the ages vary depending on the interpretations. It is often defined as those who have reached sexual maturity, but who are not married (Schindler, 1997, cited in Ornstein, 2008) and the range could therefore possibly include children as young as 10 or 11 who reach puberty early. From the spiritual aspect, it encompasses anyone between the ages of 18 and 35, inclusive, with the rationale being that many of the most important decisions in life are in these ages (Unitarian Universalist Association, 2014).

Theorists' definition of the term also differs. In his model of the eight stages of life, Erikson (1950) categorized 'young adult' as the 'intimacy versus isolation' stage, i.e. 19 to 40 years old while Havighurst lowered the range to between 19 to 29 years old, classifying the activities in this stage as aiming toward beginning life; finding a mate, and starting a career and a family (Havighurst, 1972).

In studies on the usage of the *Worldwide Web*, broad age categories are proffered by *Web* researchers. These are summarized in Figure 1.1.

	AGE CATEGORIES		
***WEB* Researchers**	**Young/Younger Adults**	**Old adults**	**Older Adults**
Meyer, et al. (1997)	< 65	-	65 & above
Chadwick-Dias, et al. (2004)	< 40	40 – 64	65 & above
Pitkow & Kehoe (1997)	19 – 25	26 – 50	51 & above
Graff (2005)	19 – 21	22 – 46	Not mentioned
Grahame, et al. (2004)	20 – 31	Not mentioned	55 – 62

Figure 1.1: Age Categories on the *Worldwide Web*

In Figure 1.1, the ages in the different categories differ rather considerably but interpretations of what young adults undergo during this period are somewhat similar; it is a stage where important decisions in life are made and take place. As young adults in their late teens finish school and enter into their early 20s, they are faced with a number of life's issues and begin to take on responsibilities of adulthood. This is similar in Malaysia where students generally complete their formal secondary education by 17 ('O' levels) or 19 ('A' levels) years old, and enter university for about four years or more depending on their field of studies. Having left the safety net of the school environment, young adults are at the threshold of their lives, grappling with choices and decisions they have to make. It is this transition period of leaving 'teenagehood' and moving into adulthood that is seen as the most controversial and ambiguous stage of life where they strive to be self-reliant, independent, and more mature thinking (Ornstein, 2008). With the *Worldwide Web* at their feet, navigating their life in the era of computer technology is more challenging than ever before.

Based on the descriptions above and the findings of the *Windows Live Spaces* (2006) research that the majority of Malaysian active bloggers are made up of youngsters between the ages of 24 years and below, this research is therefore limited to bloggers from 18 to 25 years of age who are still receiving some form of education at higher institutions of learning, the training grounds for academic and holistic development.

This sub-section has explained the rationale for choosing 18 to 25 year old Malaysian bloggers in this study. The next sub-section will explain more

about the focus of the study and how the idea of studying young Malaysian bloggers and their blog writing came about.

1.1 Focus of the Study

This study investigates the personal blogging practices of young Malaysians from 18 to 25 years old. It looks at their use of English as they write for self and with an audience in mind. At this stage of life where most of them have left formal mandatory school education, they are discovering and locating themselves in society. Using blogs as an outlet for self-expression and for finding their niche among the complexities of relationships and networks, their writing expresses their individuality and identity. As the *Windows Live Spaces* (2006) revealed, 56% of Malaysian bloggers started their blogs primarily to express their views about things that matter greatly to them in this liberated medium of expression.

Bloggers, as social actors in the field of Information, Communications, and Technology (ICT) whose fundamental tools include the use of language to connect or network with other people, have the freedom to write largely as they wish through the medium of CMC. The idea of writing without being graded is also a great motivation for them to write. This study, therefore, seeks to discover the following:

RQ1: What are the blogging practices of young Malaysian bloggers?

RQ2: How are they using this medium of communication?

RQ3: How do they use English in their blogs?

This study employs mixed methods using three instruments in order to answer the questions above. These methods are explained in Chapter Four. The following paragraphs explain the impetus for and my position as a researcher in this study.

The idea for this research came when I observed that students in my English vocabulary class who owned blogs and who blogged in English were more active and interested in using the language. This was at a time when the interest in blogging had not really caught on in this part of the world. I wondered then whether there was a link between blogging and being active users of the language. The general observation of most writing classes had been that students disliked class writing. And yet, these were students who were interested in writing and who were avid writers of their blogs. I wanted to find out more about blogging and its potential as a tool for learning the language and started out to study the students in my class who blogged. As blogging on *Blogger* and *Wordpress* were not well-known in Malaysia at that time, most of them used their *Friendster* account, an online social network, to blog. Only one or two of the more prolific ones had *Blogger* accounts. Students in my class who did not own blogs but who wanted to be involved in the study were encouraged to start one.

I was, admittedly, a novice where blogging was concerned at that time, but as I delved deeper, I realised there were other issues involved among these students who wanted to blog, such as privacy issues, a fear of revealing themselves and their low achievement in English language

proficiency, a fear of providing negative feedback, albeit honest, regarding their peers' blog writing, etc. However, they bravely took part in the small study where I protected their privacy as much as possible by creating a private group blog within *Friendster*. My findings from this study led me to branch out and conduct a full scale study involving random volunteers in the Malaysian blogosphere. As I conducted research on it, I was drawn not only to their blogging activities but also to how they were using language in their blogs to express themselves and their identity. This is significant at a time when the world is becoming an even more complex place for young people placing themselves in a challenging social networking world using the language(s) they have in their repertoire to have their voices heard.

This study is therefore focussed on young Malaysians who blogged in English in their non-high profile personal weblogs and whose blog *commentors* were mostly their offline contacts. It is further limited to those who were still receiving some form of formal education.

Now that the rationale for the study has been explained, the next section will briefly describe how the research is conducted while the theoretical perspectives behind it are located in Chapter Four.

1.2 Methodology

The current study takes the perspective that knowledge is socially constructed (Berger & Luckmann, 1966), all meaningful accounts of the real world are mediated by the social contexts in which such accounts are

constructed (Pfohl, 2008), and the blogosphere is a real world where its social actors construct knowledge of the blogging phenomena and play a major role in fashioning it through their choices. Therefore, this study makes both the bloggers themselves and their blog texts the focus of its research as both inputs are required to complement the findings.

Three sets of data are obtained:

1. Survey data – involving 62 young Malaysian bloggers who blog mainly in English.

2. Semi-structured interview data – Interviews were conducted with six of the survey participants to engage them in narrating their language learning and language use experiences, their perception of the varieties of English used in blogs, their perception of their own blogs, and what their concerns were regarding their blogging. The interviewees' blog contents were also analysed using a thematic coding procedure to discover popular trends.

3. Blog data - The blog posts and the blog communication of one interviewee's blog were examined for language strategies used to convey meaningful messages. The findings are then verified through subsequent interviews with the blog author.

As much as possible, verification of their 'young Malaysian' status was done by visiting the weblog URLs (where given). The interviewees were selected from the survey respondents who had provided their blog address. The sample involved in this study is limited to those who blogged

mainly in English and who were still receiving some form of formal education. This study yielded information on the whole blogging experience for these young Malaysian bloggers in a society not known for being extroverted or for exposing details of their private lives.

This sub-section has briefly explained how the study is conducted. The next section gives a brief outline of the thesis and shows what each chapter is about.

1.3 Thesis Outline

This study examines the blogging practices and use of language in the Malaysian blogosphere, yielding information on the use of varieties of English as a strategy in the public platform of blogging among young Malaysians. The study straddles two fields, the use of a social media tool (blogging) and the use of language, within the context of Malaysia. In order to understand the data, it is necessary to provide some background information regarding the history of the English language in the Malaysian context. This is found in Chapter 2 which explains the socio-cultural and political influences on the variants of English found in the blogs, and how the strategy of using these variants deliver messages effectively and efficiently, in the way they were intended.

Chapter 3 discusses the various issues in the area of blogging and a theoretical perspective for this thesis. Chapter 4 details and justifies the choice of methodology used for the collection and analysis of the sets of data obtained through the different instruments. Chapters 5, 6, and 7

discuss the findings of the study with the focus of each chapter on the findings gleaned from the three different sets of data. Chapter 8 is the concluding chapter which gives a summary of the findings, implications, and suggestions for future research.

1.4 Summary of Chapter One

In this chapter, I have introduced the topic of my study and given the rationale behind it. I have also briefly mentioned the instruments used in this study and why the instruments are applicable in this study. The study focuses on young Malaysian bloggers who blog mainly in English and who are still receiving some form of formal education. This forms the parameters of the research.

The next chapter provides more in-depth background information on the history of the English language in Malaysia and the role(s) it plays in the Malaysian society. This chapter is important as it informs the language choices the bloggers made in their blog writing.

CHAPTER 2: THE MALAYSIAN CONTEXT

2.0 Introduction

This research investigates the communication that takes place in the Malaysian blogosphere, specifically in the blogs of Malaysians within the age range of 18 to 25 years old who blog mainly in English. Amongst other issues, it looks at the language that is used in their blog writing and especially in their communication with their *commentors* who are mainly their existing offline friends. This means communication with fellow Malaysians who are also users of English. As such, it is necessary to provide background information on the introduction, status, and role of English in Malaysia in order to comprehend the varieties of English used in the blogs and how when they are used would achieve what effect. An awareness of the history of English in Malaysia, the role English has played in pre- and post-Independence Malaysia, and the people's perception towards the different varieties of English being used, can give a clearer understanding of not only the cultural aspect of using the varieties of English to communicate and to blog but also of how the social actors manipulate their repertoire of languages when engaging their fellow bloggers in the blogosphere.

In this chapter and elsewhere, all examples with sources not quoted are the researcher's own samples. It is also important to note that the words 'discourse', 'communication', and 'language' are used interchangeably throughout the dissertation.

2.1 English in Malaysia

2.1.1 The History of English Language in Malaysia

The English language was first used in Malaysia, then called Malaya, in the late 18th century when the British settled in Penang in search of natural resources to fuel the Industrial Revolution and to trade (Pillai, 2012). Having gained control of Malaya's trade and administrative power, the language of the British then became the 'language of the rulers' and was a representation of power and prestige as only the elite and privileged in the colonial administration were able to speak and understand the language (Talbot, 1989; Asmah, 2000).

A major factor in the spread of English was through the English education system which was largely attended by children of relatively affluent Chinese and Indians and children of the Malay aristocracy until World War II (Talbot, 1989). The English education was also accessible to less than one percent of the country's population through scholarships awarded to bright young children from rural areas. It was therefore an exceedingly prestigious education which ensured a stable job with the government and an elevated social status, resulting in no resistance towards English as parents made sacrifices to ensure their children received an English education (Asmah, 2000). However, this attitude changed in the 1950s.

2.1.2 The Changing Roles of English in Malaysia and the Resulting Effects

The key foundation of the independence which Malaya gained from the British in 1957 was national identity, forged through the union of Malaya's three main ethnic groups. A crucial element of that identity was the Malay language or *Bahasa Melayu*, as it was known at that time. English language could not remain as *the* language of post-colonial Malaysia as it was perceived as the language of the colonisers. Hence, the Malay language was made the national language (*Bahasa Melayu* was renamed *Bahasa Malaysia* in 1969 to reflect a nationalistic image) while English was maintained as an official language for ten years after Independence (Commissioner of Law Revision, 2009), and in 1967, it became a second language until today. As a second language, it ranks

> *"second in importance in the hierarchy of the Malaysian languages, seen in terms of the official recognition given to the language, its importance as a language of educational instruction, as well as its position as an important language in the professions" (Asmah, 2000:12).*

However, English was still a dominant language used for a variety of social functions with non-native speakers of English within the society (Gonzalez, 2000), the language of banking, business and trade, and of the medical profession. It was also the language of the hearth in some families, including Eurasians of Portuguese descent, children of mixed parentage, and mono-ethnic families who have shifted to English (David & Faridah Noor, 1999; David, Naji & Kaur, 2003, cited in Pillai, 2006). English also

continued to be the language in courts of law until the late 1980s when it was replaced by Malay.

In the national education system, however, the change from English was a challenge and had serious implications which led to a long-drawn debate on the importance of English in Malaysia which still continues to this date. Beginning with Year One in 1970, English was no longer the medium of instruction (MoI). Meanwhile, a pass in 'O' level English language was no longer an entrance requirement to public universities, resulting in a lack of a push factor to achieve a higher level of proficiency in English.

As a result of these three factors, i.e. English was no longer the official language in the public sector (1967), the MoI in education (1970 onwards), nor a pre-requisite for tertiary education in public institutions (1990s onwards), there was a decline in English language proficiency which was particularly pronounced among the younger generation of Malaysia. Non-standard varieties of ME also became more evident especially in oral communication.

The decline in English language proficiency especially among the younger generation brought about undesirable implications for their future, with reports that most of the university graduates "cannot express themselves well in the language, not to mention their proficiency when required to introduce a product or service, negotiate or write any proposal or report in English" (The StarOnline, 'Yesteryear's switch to BM put paid to good English today', 2009, June 23). The government then began efforts to

reverse the situation at all levels of education through various methods but which were met with strong objections on nationalistic grounds from various quarters. At the receiving end of the vacillating decisions regarding the importance of English was the younger generation who had to keep up with the flipping of the 'on English, off English' switch as their MoI for certain academic subjects.

The Changing Attitude towards the Use of English

Whilst the government was tasked with ensuring its peoples were equipped with the language and technological know-how to meet the challenges of the present-day world, the Malaysian peoples' perception of their identity vis-a-vis English became more evident. The history of English in Malaysia and the perceived threat to the identity of Malaysia and its people had a large part in it. As Noraini (2008:27) pointed out, 'When Malaysia achieved independence from the British ... there was this passion to form an identity that is divorced from the legacy of the British'. Citing language as a barometer of identity, the choice of Bahasa Malaysia as the national language was an obvious one as a uniting factor in the formation of a *Bangsa Malaysia* (Malaysian race) in such a multicultural, multilingual, and multiethnic society as Malaysia (Noraini, 2008).

However now, in the face of Malaysia being left behind in terms of achievement and progress in the world, the people were forced to re-examine the levels of identity that they saw as being tied to the language they use. Hence, implementing more use of English in education was a

delicate balancing act of moving towards progress without threatening the identity of *Bangsa Malaysia*.

To the general public, 'English' simply refers to the Standard British English (SBE) that was taught in English schools in Malaya, although in reality the standard variety that is used today is not strictly SBE but the acrolectal variety of ME known as Standard Malaysian English (SME) but it was not an established standard. Other varieties of ME used in general communication are also not accepted as the standard to use in education although some teachers employ it as an informal close-gap strategy with their students in English classes in school (Rajadurai, 2004).

The general perception of ME is that it is 'wrong or incorrect English' and therefore should not be used, especially not on public platforms (Pillai, 2008). People who use ME are generally perceived as having poor proficiency in English, and the tendency is to equate ME with its colloquial variety instead of viewing it as an umbrella term that comprises all the sub-varieties of ME (Baskaran, 1987; Gaudart, 2000; Morais, 2001). As Kachru (1992) also pointed out, the local varieties are often barely accepted in their own communities where it is seen as not necessary to deviate from the standard variety, which is usually an external native variety.

Among researchers of varieties of English (Platt & Weber, 1980; Tay, 1989; Azirah, 2002; Pillai, 2006; Schneider, 2007), especially in newer studies however, there is greater tolerance and acceptance of the different varieties of ME especially in informal use because the varieties are a

testimony of the rich socio-cultural infusion in the language and they bring greater depth to the communication. These varieties are also, in part, the result of the numerous policy changes on the learning and use of English in multicultural and multi-ethnic Malaysia over the years. They are the varieties different from the one left behind by the British settlers and spoken by the Malaysian people with variations influenced by their ethno-socio-economic backgrounds.

2.1.3 The Malaysian Users of English Today

The Malaysian people's exposure to and use of English is diverse. If they have had an education, they would have learnt some English at school. If not, the media, the workplace, and the people around them would provide the opportunity to use English. It can safely be assumed that almost everyone in Malaysia speaks at the very least, a smattering of basic English words or phrases such as *thank you*, *welcome*, *sorry*, *excuse me*, or *hello* due to constant exposure to the language or mix of languages from the media. Naturally, those who use English both at school and at home have more exposure to English than those who use English only at school. In all these situations, the English used is of the Malaysian varieties, with code-switching and code-mixing as part of the features found especially in their informal oral communication.

This stems from the evolving nature of language which 'changes to meet the needs of its users' (David, 2000:64). As a language which has seen various changes of its status and use from the time of the British colonial rule until now, the Malaysian varieties are most evident on the streets, in

locally produced English television shows which depict typical Malaysian life, on radio and print advertisements, and in CMC. The effects of policy changes involving the English language and the multicultural population that make up Malaysia are a strong influence on this mixed styles of speaking and writing in English, popularly known as *Manglish*. It is generally not associated with SME but the Colloquial Malaysian English (CME) and is seen as a higher variety than Broken Malaysian English (BME) varieties typically found in street conversations which are sometimes called 'street English' and '[4]*rojak* English' among the users of ME.

Lee Su Kim, a professor of English and one of the earliest users of the word *Manglish* who had published a book on *Manglish*, explained in an interview given to a local radio station (BFM 89.9, 2011) that *Manglish* is CME which evolved from its users being inventive and resourceful when faced with cultural concepts and experiences which could not be expressed in Standard English. She further explained that *Manglish* is used in informal situations for convenience when wanting to avoid the long-winded phrases of Standard English. To her, *Manglish* is not synonymous with bad English or grammatically incorrect English, and definitely not a cause of broken English. It is a basilectal ME variety Malaysians slip into in informal

[4] a Malay word for a Malaysian appetiser consisting of a mixture of different fruits and vegetables served with prawn paste and crushed roasted peanuts, hence the metaphor; it is a term commonly used in Malaysia to refer to code-switched or code-mixed languages.

situations. In other words, *Manglish* is not a weakness in using proper English but an ability to speak it.

In ME, adaptations of SBE are found at the lexical (e.g. *horn him* instead of *honk at him*), syntactical (e.g. *got* instead of *have* as a main verb), and phonological levels (e.g. a lack of vowel contrast between typical vowel pairs such as in the words *pet* and *pat*).

Besides education, other factors have resulted in the many varieties of English used in formal and informal situations among different groups of people, depending on the nature of the relationship among the interlocutors (Pillai, 2006) and the purpose of the communication. CME is the variety that is used "for intranational communication, between Malaysians of varying ethnicity, as a medium of local communication" (Gill, 2002a:52) and this variety serves as "a carrier of a distinctly Malaysian identity" (Schneider, 2007:150). Pillai and Fauziah (2006) found that CME is used in radio advertisements mainly for comic effect as well as to give a sense of 'Malaysianness'. The ability to use the different ME varieties is dependent on factors such as the chronology of language(s) acquired and the variety of English they were exposed to, the main language used for daily transactions, the type of school in which they were educated (where the MoI and the amount of exposure to English differs), the level of education and MoI in tertiary education, and the socio-economic and cultural background. Although a higher economic status provides for the opportunity to learn and use English, it can be hindered by a negative disposition towards English. Thus, the people's cultural and even religious

backgrounds can influence their perception of and attitude towards English. Some religious groups perceive English and its related culture as a precursor to moral decadence and erosion of values. Such attitudes tend to inhibit the ability to learn and use English.

All these factors as well as the types of sub-lects they have in their repertoire influence the variety, command, and frequency of use of English by Malaysian speakers. Other factors such as language aptitude and motivation do play an important role in it as well.

2.2 Malaysian English as a Variety of English

As mentioned in Chapter One, Malaysian English (ME) refers to the full continuum of varieties spoken by Malaysians from the pidgins used by hawkers to the ones used by academics which the majority of Malaysians understand (Gaudart, 2000). Nair-Venugopal (2000a:78) refers to ME as "the variety of English which is geographically distributed and socially defined within Malaysia", though it shares some similar features with Singapore English. This ME, she says, is the variety spoken by the 'speech community' (Gumperz 1972; Labov 1972a) and 'speech fellowship' (Firth 1957, cited in Nair-Venugopal, 2000a) of Malaysian speakers of English. Therefore, simply put, ME is the variety of English used by Malaysians that cuts across the social divide of English-educated and non English-educated Malaysians and the different ethnic groups in Malaysia. Which variety of ME is used by which Malaysians then depends on a host of

factors such as socio-economic and educational background, exposure to and use of the language, in which situation and location it is used, with whom it is used, and the reasons for using it. This gives rise to many more varieties of ME than we probably are aware of. The situation is made even more fluid by the influx of migrant workers from countries such as the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Vietnam, and Cambodia, amongst others, adding more varieties that are spoken in the country.

Li (1998), Morais (2000), and Tay (1989) view varieties of English in multilingual communities as independent systems because the features of the varietal English evolved as a result of languages in contact, used 'in a systematic and consistent manner both in spoken and written forms' (Hamida, 1985:25, cited in Soo, 1990:199). Most varieties of English that emerge in multilingual communities are a result of learning a second or foreign language as learners transfer their L1 cultural conventions and linguistic patterns into L2 language systems to make these easier for them to understand, identify with, and manipulate (Kirkpatrick, 2000).

Morais (2000) sees these features as dynamic and creative nativizations where the learners shape the L2 input to conform to their knowledge of the world, adapting the language resourcefully to suit their culture. These systematic variations show that they are innovators who have claimed ownership of the language they are using by injecting their own identity into it and thereby having autonomy over the variety they use. The features mark the ethnic and cultural background of its users, and bear significant implications in the messages that are transmitted (Kuang, 2002), without

which the implications are lost. Other scholars such as Platt and Weber (1980), Wong (1982), and Anie (1998) also share similar views.

In her investigation on the English used during training sessions of well-established local business organisations, Nair-Venugopal (1999, cited in 2003) found that despite organizational directives to adhere to Standard English usage, localized structural and lexical speech variations of English were used at the workplace to suit the varieties that clients were comfortable with, to ensure effective delivery of message. Her findings correspond with those by Morais (1994) and Anie (1998). The local varieties of English are seen as a versatile variety that is viable for effective communication and not as a distortion of the English language, for identity marking and solidarity between Malaysians, and for expediency and efficiency, thus "demonstrating the ascendancy of the speech forms and styles of Malaysian English (ME) as the localized variety, and of other 'ways of speaking'" (Nair-Venugopal, 2003:16).

Studies such as these give a better understanding of how language used in an interactive multicultural and multilingual community enriches the language with cultural connotations, forming systems that are richer in meaning and context (Tay, 1989). Those who view varieties of English positively advocate awarding such languages the status of independent systems.

There are, nevertheless, reservations about simply accepting variants of English spoken around the globe as World Englishes or as accepted

varieties of English. Gonzalez (2000) raises the concern that it may be difficult to determine the status of acceptance of these 'New Englishes' or even their awareness as 'national' varieties because the features vary from group to group, and therefore advocates establishing the criteria for acceptance as a feature in order to ascertain its status and using frequency counting within a valid and reliable sample to determine this acceptance. Other scholars view features in the varieties as linguistic errors in L2 learning and call them language interferences (Berthold, Mangubhai & Batorowicz, 1997; Skiba, 1997; Bhela, 1999) and interlinguistic phenomena (Duran, 1994), as exhibited by L2 learners who struggle with the language. This is possibly so among L2 users in Malaysia especially with the decline in mastery of the English language and reduced exposure to it. However, an increasing number of studies that have been carried out on the use of CME also show their widespread use at all levels of English-speaking society in Malaysia, dispelling the notion that CME is only the result of a lack of proficiency in English. As Govindan and Pillai (2009) stressed, the CME variety is a fluid entity and more proficient speakers of English are able to weave in and out of CME and SME. The use of ME then is a testament of growing acceptance of it among the community and international discussions on ME as a variety (or varieties) also show global interest and awareness of varieties of English around the world.

2.2.1 Features of Malaysian English as a Variety of English

Like other varieties of English which emerged as a result of languages in contact, ME contains features that form its uniqueness such as, code-switching, code-mixing, lexical shifts, localized cultural expressions, and simplification, which are most distinguishable in oral communication such as those used at the workplace (Morais, 1994; Nair-Venugopal, 2003), in informal situations, in home communication (Kuang, 2002; Lee, in BFM89.9, 2011), and sometimes in the classroom (Rajadurai, 2004).

These features have specific functions or roles in multicultural communication. For example, Morais' (2000) examination of ME used by working-class Malaysians reveals that code-switching in colloquial English and Malay is used as a close-gap strategy or to display solidarity when the management and the workers interact. Similarly, Tay (1989) discovered that code-switching and code-mixing in multilingual exchanges are communication strategies used for establishing solidarity and rapport with fellow interlocutors, and for elucidating and interpreting the message especially when using SBE would not produce the right connotation. Simulated ME features used in many local radio advertisements (Rajadurai, 2004) also seek to build solidarity with Malaysian listeners by creating a Malaysian mood and environment through use of such features. These socio-linguistic tools are, therefore, a linguistic advantage employed to show affiliation to a particular social group and to express solidarity (Skiba, 1997). Giles and Clair (1979) theorized that these features emphasize or

minimize social differences between the interlocutors, depending on whether they seek approval in the social situation (convergent speech) or seek to disassociate themselves from the others in the group (divergent speech).

Furthermore, these features are used to express moods, attitudes, and connotation which monolingual speakers do by varying levels of formality, thus increasing the impact of their speech and enabling the users to use their speech in an effective manner (Crystal, 2010). Milroy (1987, cited in Skiba, 1997) gave a further insight into the use of such features where different social codes are assigned different values because some are more appropriate than others when used with different interlocutors. These dispute the idea that speakers code-switch and code-mix because they are not able to speak the target language well. Instead, they support the view that code-switching and code-mixing shows a high level of linguistic sophistication since it requires simultaneous processing of the rules of both languages when relating them to each other (Bokamba, 1989; Cook, 1991, both cited in Norrish, 1997).

ME's distinctive discoursal and stylistic features can be found in its lexicon, syntax, and phonology. Examples for each are discussed in the following sub-sections.

Malaysian English Lexicon

The ME lexis typically includes borrowings associated with the various daily practices and the local cultures which carry with them additional connotation not deliverable through use of SBE lexis. For example,

kampung (Malay: meaning 'village') also refers to one's roots and familial ties, and therefore *balik kampung* (to go back to one's hometown or village) signifies having not forgotten one's older folks back home by visiting them, hence, a joyous occasion looked forward to by the older folks who may not have seen their children or grandchildren for a while and by the children and grandchildren who look forward to being pampered with delicious home-cooked food. *Balik kampung* therefore means more than just going back to visit the older folks. Using this borrowed phrase allows its intended and richer meaning to be conveyed, such as in this sentence: "This year's *balik kampung* during the [5]*Raya* break is more exciting as even relatives living overseas are coming back."

This strategy for acculturating Standard English to current sociological and economic contexts of Malaysia is an ingenious and a creative use of language (Partridge, 1933; and Lowenberg, 1986; both cited in David, 2000). Assimilation and integration of L1 loanwords result in a wider English base of words over time and mainstream dictionaries bear evidence of this. For example, the Malay word *mengamuk* (amok), the Chinese phrase 叩(kou4) 头(tou2) (kowtow), 风(feng1) 水(shui3) (fengshui), and the Cantonese phrase 大(tai3) 风(foong1) (typhoon) are found in the English dictionaries.

Malaysians also use non-standard loaned and coined words in their CME lexicon which show the users' ability to convey the intended meaning

[5] The Muslim new year or *Eid al Fitr*.

whilst adhering to the rules of the language. As examples, "That hospital, got a lot of *bumi* nurses" (Platt, et. al., 1984:93) and "Don't *kaypoh* my business!" (Platt, et. al., 1984:93). *Bumi* is a truncated form of the Malay word *bumiputra* which refers to ethnic Malays and other indigenous peoples in Malaysia, while *kaypoh* is a Hokkien word which means being nosey. Both loanwords are used in their original meaning. Besides that, Malaysians also permutate and extend the original meaning of loanwords, such as in these sentences: "Aiyoh, so *malufying* lah. She said no when I asked her out" and "Wah, she's so *kampung*. Don't know how to use the coffeemaker." In the former, the addition of –fying to *malu* (a Malay word meaning 'embarrassing') is a creative way of conforming to the structure of English adjectives like 'terrifying' or 'horrifying', while in the latter, the meaning of *kampung* (a Malay word meaning 'small rural village') is extended to convey the derogatory connotation of being a country bumpkin.

Colloquial Malaysian English Syntax

CME syntax which does not conform to Standard English syntax is manifested in a variety of ways. It is typically found in its simplified forms which in general do not distort the message it carries. It removes what is deemed as wordiness, delivering the message in a more direct and economical form.

Simplification devices which are used to simplify the forms are the omission of auxiliaries (e.g. "Who you?" or 'You who?"), disregarding subject-verb agreement rules (e.g. "He don't want anymore."), using short

direct phrases (e.g. "No stock."), and simplifying sentence tag (e.g. "You want to go there, is it?"). 'Is it?' is positioned at the end of statements to express doubt, surprise, or to request confirmation regardless of which verb is used in the body of the statement, seen as a simplification process found in all versions of 'Malaysian pidgin English' (Asmah, 1993:118), and therefore a very common feature in the CME communication of all races in Malaysia. Some of these features are also similarly found in Colloquial Singapore English (Colloquial SingE) because of the geographical proximity and shared cultural aspects (Pillai, 2012). Other strategies which are used to deviate from the Standard English syntax in ME include translating and importing words/phrases literally from the source language, making grammatical shifts with extensions of meaning, giving existing words new meanings, and using particles as exclamations or for emphasis.

Another indication of the CME syntax is the use of particles or fillers, such as *lah*, *mah*, *ah*, *one*, *what*, which appear at the end of phrases and sentences. Regardless of their location in the utterances, these Malaysian discourse markers, bear specific connotations due to L1 influences and play an important function in conveying the true intentions of its speakers (Kuang, 2002). As powerful oral devices that help deflect confrontational situations, they allow users to convey real intentions without "being too direct, too brusque, too intimidating or too aggressive" (2002:150). They convey nuances which in Standard English language are executed through varying pitch and stress, inflections, and intonation. Though such particles

in ME are normally used in informal oral communication among Malaysians, with rapid advancements in computer technology and social networking on the Internet, they have made it into the very public domain of the interactive written communication of CMC.

English words which are used to form particles in ME tend to deviate from their regular meanings and carry specific functions. For example, words like 'what' and 'one' are used at the end of phrases or sentences for emphasis. For instance, "I didn't want it *what,* but you offered it to me" is expressed with a falling tone to emphasise the point that the person had not requested for it, and "Why you like that *one*?" is used to provide additional emphasis to the matter being mentioned, i.e. 'like *that*', although it is syntactically redundant, as "Why are you behaving like that?" would have been sufficient to convey the message.

Non-English particles which are commonly found in the discourse of ME speakers from all Malaysian ethnic groups are mainly influenced by Chinese languages such as *meh, ya lor, nah, haiya*h, and *waliao eh.* They carry special connotations which English sentences alone are not able to succinctly and economically convey. For example, expressing 'yes' is not the same as saying 'ya' as 'ya' is used to "boost the illocutionary force of a statement, and to also signal that this is a statement that the speaker considers to be uncontroversial in nature" (Wee, 2010:45). Some particles convey different nuances when expressed with different inflections, such as with the *lah* particle which has a wide range of connotations including persuasion (Soo, 1990), (e.g. "Come lah, the party won't be lively without

you''), disapproval (e.g. ''Don't do that lah!''), emphasis on a choice (e.g. ''Take this one lah''), and boredom or irritation (e.g. ''I know lah!''). The use of *lah* is a softening strategy to reduce the harshness of a rebuke in Asian communities which have always avoided the nature of face-to-face confrontations, preferring to employ indirectness and subtleness in their requests (Asmah, 1992). Thus, *lah* as a language strategy and a verbal aid, softens the impact when dealing with controversial and conflicting issues. It has proven to be an effective strategy for conveying a negative remark and is a face-saving strategy in a community of people that values the portrayal of a positive image of themselves.

Malaysian English Phonology

Tay (1993, in Pillai, 2006:65) points out that ''the variety of English spoken is affected not only by the speakers' own linguistic background but also by the linguistic background of the other people in that community''. Thus, ME phonological features are marked not only by dialectal variations but also regional variations. In a multicultural society like Malaysia where the people speak a variety of languages, it is sometimes difficult to identify speakers only through their spoken language but it is easy to identify them as Malaysian speakers of English.

Common phonological features which are distinctively ME include the tendency to replace word initial voiceless **/θ/** with **/t/**, with the final plosive omitted (e.g. **/tiŋ/** for 'think'), and word medial voiced **/ð/** with **/d/** (e.g. **/brʌdər/** for 'brother'), making no distinction between long and short vowel sounds (e.g. 'ship' and 'sheep' are produced similarly), a lack of vowel

contrast (e.g. between /e/ and /æ/), diphthongs being sometimes produced as monophthongs (e.g. /tʃe(r)/ for 'chair'), diphthongs and triphthongs are produced with the insertion of /w/ in between the vowels (e.g. /flauwər/ for 'flour') (Pillai, 2006), and sometimes monophthongs are also produced as diphthongs (e.g. /heid/ for 'head', /beid/ for 'bed').

Stress patterns, intonation, and rhythm in ME are also marked differently from SBE. A common feature is the placing of the primary stress on the second syllable of a noun instead of the initial syllable. For example, 'rebel' (/'rebəl/), a noun with the stress on the first syllable, is frequently produced as (/rə'bel/) with the stress on the second syllable, making it a verb instead. The ME intonation is also generally more syllable-timed where the long/short vowel pairs tended to conflate than stressed-timed like SBE (Tan & Low, 2010).

2.2.2 Sociolectal Features of the Varieties of Malaysian English

Malaysian English is unmistakably a variety different from that of BSE. Though we can easily identify ME when it is used, distinguishing and describing which variety of ME it is, and what the differences are, is not as easy because the demarcation lines between the different varieties are fuzzy. Malaysians too are not exactly sure of the clear distinctions between each variety of ME and varying labels for them add to the confusion. For example, the basilectal variety has been labelled as *rojak* English, street English, broken English, 'half-past six English' (Baskaran, 1987; Baskaran, 2005:18), bad English, and *Manglish*. This is largely due to the varied

elements that influence and make up ME, including Malaysia's geography, its history of English in the different states of the country, and its multiracial and multilingual population.

Scholars too, use different terms to describe the three varieties of ME, and lack of a systematic and formal categorization by the Malaysian bodies has resulted in a confusion of terms. The acrolectal variety is generally referred to as SME (Soo, 1990; Morais, 2000), the mesolectal variety as CME or *Manglish* and the basilectal variety as broken English. However, the mesolectal and basilectal varieties are sometimes lumped together and referred to as ME as the features are the same although they occur more frequently in the basilectal variety (Soo, 1990).

The three varieties of ME are not seen as discrete varieties but a continuum (Platt & Weber, 1980). The acrolectal variety is used in formal situations generally by the English-medium educated and the mainstream media, the mesolectal variety in informal situations and usually in spoken contexts by the English-speaking public in their daily transactions. The basilectal variety, on the other hand, is a mesh of local languages combined with unconventional variations to the lexical and syntactic structures of SBE. It is generally used by L2 speakers who are not as conversant in English, and also by those who are proficient in the language when engaging with L2 speakers who are not as conversant in English. As a continuum, it means that there is no clear-cut division between and among these varieties, with speakers shifting up or down the continuum speaking sometimes the acrolectal or the mesolectal, depending on a number of factors such as

who they are engaging with, the discourse situation, and the purpose (Pillai, 2006).

Morais (2000), in her study of the type of English used by white-collar and blue-collar groups in a manufacturing plant, found that the middle-class Malaysians generally use SME in formal communications which she labels as Malaysian English Type I (MEI) and the Colloquial Variety in informal contexts which she labels as Malaysian English Type II (MEII), while blue-collar Malaysians have only MEII in their repertoire. The type of English they use, she says, is an indication of "their membership in different socio-economic and ethnic networks" (Morais, 2000:90). When compared to the varieties used in neighbouring Singapore, MEI is equivalent to Singapore English, seen more as a *native* variety, (Platt & Weber, 1980) while MEII is equivalent to a *second language* variety, sometimes known as the Singlish variety.

Fadillah (2000), labels the sub-varieties of ME as the Educated Malaysian English (EME) which she describes as the Malaysian acrolect closest to international English (similar to Morais' MEI), CME which is similar to Morais' MEII, and a third subvariety, which is the pidgin or [6]broken English.

Within these sub-varieties, there exist ethnic and socio-economic features which result in phonological differences between, for example, the SME

[6] Sometimes used by the Malaysian public to refer to any variety of English which is non-standard or colloquial

spoken by a Kelantanese Malay and a Sabahan Chinese. Another variety of ME is Malay English (Zuraidah, 2000) which is manifested especially in the way in which the English words are pronounced, so called because of the phonological interference of the speaker's native language which is Malay.

Acrolect speakers can generally shift in and out of the sociolects or code-switch across the varietal range of ME because of a wider repertorie of ME at their disposal (Fadillah, 2000). As proficient speakers, they are able to use SME although they may employ CME in the home domain as an informal and intimate speaking atmosphere to establish a common ground among the speakers (Pillai, 2008), while as Malaysians who come into contact with blue-collar workers in a wide range of daily dealings, they are able to accommodate the CME used by these people when there is no other mutual language. Thus, there is a reason to resort to using pidgin or broken English, a variety which Gonzalez (2000) identifies as the code-switching variety or mixed variety where two codes alternate or are intermingled. Basilect speakers, on the other hand, are hampered by their limited command of English and would have great difficulty in shifting up to a higher variety which demands a better command of the language. The different labels used on the three main varieties of ME are shown in Figure 2.1.

	Malaysian Varieties of English		
Scholars' categorisation	**Acrolectal**	**Mesolectal**	**Basilectal**
Morais (2000)	Malaysian English Type I; Standard Malaysian English (SME); Used by middle-class Malaysians; in formal communication	Malaysian English Type II; Colloquial Variety; used by working class Malaysians; in informal contexts	-
Platt & Weber (1980)	= Singapore English (native variety)	= second language variety	-
Fadillah (2000)	Educated Malaysian English (EME), the differences depend on the regional background of the speakers; Malaysian acrolect closest to International English	Colloquial Malaysian English (CME)	Pidgin or broken English

Figure 2.1: Three Main Varieties of Malaysian English (according to previous scholars)

In this dissertation, I am using the following terms: Standard Malaysian English (SME) to refer to the acrolectal variety, Colloquial Malaysian English (CME) to refer to the mesolectal variety, and Broken Malaysian English (BME) to refer to the basilectal variety.

2.2.3 Differentiating the Malaysian English Varieties

The syntactic structure of the ME acrolectal variety is rather similar to SBE and easy to differentiate from its other varieties. However, the mesolectal variety does not have clear differing features from the basilectal variety. Mesolectal speakers sometimes weave in and out of the two varieties with ease and at which point they stop 'speaking mesolectal' and start 'speaking basilectal' is hard to determine.

The general idea of when the basilectal variety is being used instead of the mesolectal variety is when the communication becomes heavily marked by ME features such as code-switching including borrowings and loanwords,

non-English particles, and the succinct and short sentences which omit many non-content words and pronouns. The result is a variety which is exceedingly ungrammatical to a native speaker of English but which is perfectly understood among Malaysians.

Figure 2.2 below shows the descriptors of the three varieties of ME as detailed by Baskaran (1987). It shows the differences in the three aspects of language – phonology, syntax, and lexis. The deviations mentioned in Figure 2.2 seem to be from the SBE point of view, where any deviations from the standard are viewed as a result of a lack of proficiency in the language and incorrect grammar that should not be tolerated. For example, at the acrolectal level only a slight variation in phonology is tolerated while no deviation from the SBE syntax is tolerated at all, and variations to the lexis are acceptable if the words cannot be substituted in an international context.

	Acrolect: Standard ME, formal use, international intelligibility	**Mesolect**: Dialectal ME, informal use, national intelligibility	**Basilect**: patois ME, colloquial use, patois intelligibility and currency
Phonology	Slight variation tolerated so long as it is internationally intelligible	More variation is tolerated, including prosodic features, especially stress and intonation	Extreme variation – both segmental and prosodic with intonation so stigmatized – almost unintelligible internationally
Syntax	No deviation tolerated at all	Some deviation is acceptable, although it is not as stigmatized as broken English	Substantial variation/ deviation (national intelligibility)
Lexis	Variation acceptable, especially for words not substitutable in an international context (to give a more localized context)	Lexicalization quite prevalent even for words having international English substitutes	Major lexicalization heavily infused with local language items

Figure 2.2: Features of Sociolects of Malaysian English (Source: Baskaran, 1987:53)

However, after more than two decades, this descriptor from the SBE point of view is outdated as there is more understanding of the influences that are absorbed by the language and more acceptance of the differences which are now seen as part of their heritage as English-speaking Malaysians. In other words, the influences from other languages in their repertoire are no longer seen as a weakness in their proficiency of English language but rather as expanding the repertoire and enriching the English language. Figure 2.3 shows a more current and less judgmental perspective of the continuum of ME which identifies the main linguistic characteristics of the three major sociolects (adapted from Pillai & Fauziah, 2006:41). Even in its standard ME form, the marked features are accepted for use in formal and informal situations.

	Acrolect (Standard ME)	**Mesolect** (Colloquial)	**Basilect** (Broken)
Syntax	**+standard**	**-standard**	**-standard**
Lexis	+localized lexical items accepted in formal and informal use	+localized lexical items, including those not used in more formal contexts	+localized lexical pidgin-like
Phonology	Can be ± marked ethnically	Usually, but not necessarily ± marked ethnic accent	Usually +marked ethnic accent
e.g.	• Newschapter reports • Formal letters and documents • Educational material • Legal documents • News read on television • Formal meetings • Formal speeches	Informal spoken & written communication between colleagues, friends, family members etc.	Used by those with limited proficiency in English

Figure 2.3: The Malaysian English Continuum (adapted from Pillai & Fauziah, 2006:41)

However, with increased work opportunities for migrant workers adding to the diverse cultures in Malaysia, more sub-varieties of ME have emerged alongside the existing ones. Figure 2.4 offers a more comprehensive model of the ME varieties and their speakers, capturing a more encompassing profile of ME speakers today. It shows that speakers of the acrolectal ME variety (SME), as represented by the colours yellow, lilac, and blue, are able to shift down to the CME and BME varieties when the need arises and up again to SME; while speakers of the BME varieties, as represented in green, who do not have the SME in their repertoire are not able to shift up to the CME and SME varieties because they do not have what is required to execute such a shift. It should also be noted that SME speakers who do not normally need to use the CME or BME varieties might encounter a degree of awkwardness when using the CME or BME varieties though they may be perfectly able to understand and participate in it. In Figure 2.4, the main varieties are differentiated by bold italics in boxes with solid lines, while the boxes with broken lines to the left of the diagram represent variants of the main varieties of ME spoken by their respective speakers. As discussed earlier, these variants are influenced by the languages spoken by different ethnic groups from different geographical locations in Malaysia. The variants may not be as easily detectable through the written form, but are more easily identifiable through marked phonological features.

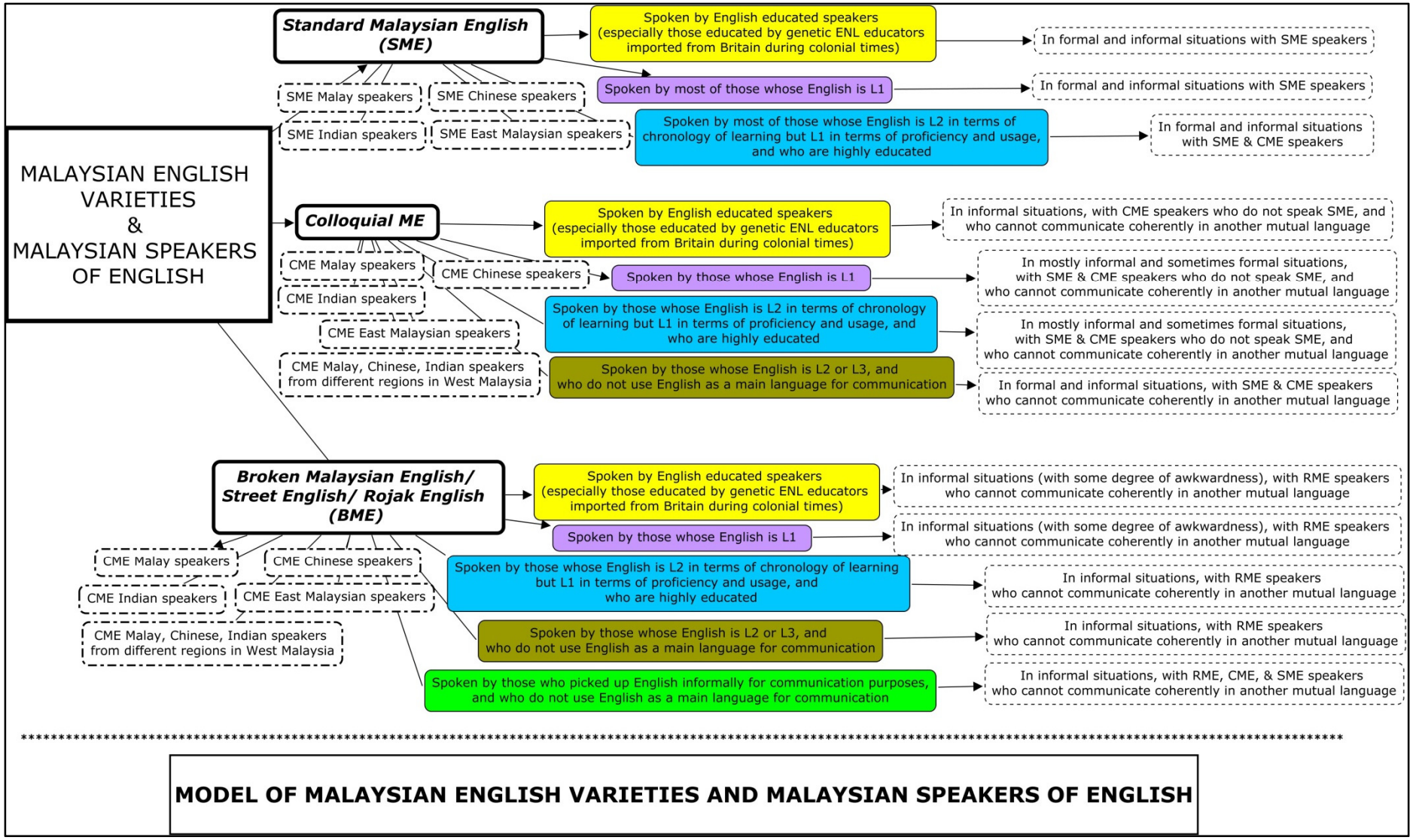


Figure 2.4: Model of Malaysian English Varieties and Malaysian Speakers of English

Sub-section Summary

The background information on the history of English in Malaysia is essential in this review to understand the beginnings of the varieties of English and how other scholars perceive these varieties. It will inform the data analysis of the blog discussions which are conducted in mostly ME for specific reasons.

The next section discusses the use of and people's perception of ME varieties on the Internet which is relevant to the current research on the use of ME varieties found in Malaysian blogs.

2.3 Malaysian English and the Internet

The global spread of English through various ways such as colonization, trade, educational opportunities, migration, and transfer of knowledge has made it an important language for international communication. Being a global language that is used by people from innumerable cultural and linguistic backgrounds, English is constantly evolving resulting in the emergence of new Englishes. Original features which are considered as redundant by L2 speakers are intentionally discarded from the new Englishes. In addition, these new Englishes have incorporated features from their L1 and knowledge of local cultures and practices which result in language patterns that are different from those of ENL speakers. While this divergence is seen by some as inferior to the Standard British English (SBE) or the American Standard English (ASE), the more popular and

contemporary view is that the new 'non-standard patterns' are by themselves standard patterns of new varieties of the language, known as World Englishes, International Englishes or by the local names where each variety is born. Because of how these speakers of English are shaping the language, the ENL speakers are no longer seen as sole owners of the English language which has become colourful, richer, and more global.

This more accepted view is largely influenced by the number of speakers of these new varieties compared to those who speak SBE or ASE. Deterding and Kirkpatrick (2006) observe that English is spoken on a regular basis more by non-native speakers of English than by native ones. Their observation supports Crystal's (2003:65, 109) estimate of 430 million L2 users compared to about 330 million L1 users of English, and is further strengthened by the surveys carried out by EF Education First (2011:8) which found that more than 75% of all English speakers are non-native and that ownership of the English language "has clearly shifted from the historic centers in the United Kingdom and the United States". In fact, EF's English proficiency survey ranked some Asia Pacific countries higher than some European countries, such as Switzerland and France, where they are assumed to have fared better in the ranking, with their close proximity to the historic centres of English in terms of geography and connections.

That English is spoken by more non-native speakers and that English is the 'operating standard for global communication' in cyberspace (Graddol, 2000:50) means that features of English evolving at a much faster rate and reaching a far wider audience through CMC is inevitable. This evolution is

aided by the progress in technological tools for communication, leading to unique forms of communication involving the use of new word forms, structures, and styles of expression in CMC where the focus of communication is on delivery of the message among the multicultural, multi-ethnic, and multilingual users around the world, rather than on the inflexible standard of correctness and native-like pronunciation (Norizah & Azirah, 2009).

Within Malaysia itself, Internet users with their bilingual and multilingual backgrounds have contributed to this evolution through their creative use of the language on the Internet. This is most evident in platforms used for social purposes such as in online chatrooms, blogs, *Twitter*, and *Facebook*, rather than for more official matters such as in business e-mails. The CME variety which is more prevalent in informal oral communication in the Malaysian setting is now also more commonly found in Internet communication such as in the Malaysian blogosphere, aided by the explosion of Internet writing and instant publishing in cyberspace. The different creative variations of English are thriving on the different platforms of online interactive written communication which is free from linguistic and academic watchdogs. Varieties of English which resulted from the geographical spread of English are capable of being propagated at a much faster pace through CMC, a concern to Malaysian proponents of BSE and ASE standards who worry about how the world might view Malaysian users of ME varieties.

However, the acceptance of ME is very much dependent on the attitudes of its users, their own command of English, and the varieties they use. There is greater acceptance of ME among the younger generation who grew up learning and speaking English without the influence of British ENL speakers regardless of their level of proficiency. In general, they are aware of colloquial varieties not being acceptable in certain formal situations, and therefore, their usage of the colloquial varieties on the Internet is also dependent on the platform they use, the online community they associate with, and their personal choice. But just exactly how big is the online community in Malaysia? This question is explored in the following section.

2.4 The Malaysian Blogosphere

According to CIA's World Factbook (2011), there were 15.355 million Internet users in Malaysia in 2009 and ranking 26th in the world. Given that Malaysia's population was listed as 27.8 million in that year (IndexMundi, 2011b), this means that approximately 55% of the population of Malaysia are Internet users. This statistics are readily available on the Internet and verifiable.

However, it is much more difficult to ascertain the size of the Malaysian blogosphere. I echo Ulicny's (2008) and Hopkins' (2011) sentiments that it is almost impossible to obtain accurate statistics on its size for a variety of reasons. Blogs are not typically geotagged (the act of adding geographic information to a piece of content) although the feature is available.

Malaysian blog directories such as Malaysia Bloggers Directory, National Alliance of Bloggers, Bloggers United Malaysia, and Malaysia Blog Directory are incomplete and have only partial listings. Both SoPo Sentral of Malaysia (a directory of blogs and websites on society, politics, and economy of Malaysia) and Mycen Blog Directory have an impressive list of Malaysian blogs in alphabetical order but they are also incomplete as they rely on individual bloggers to take the initiative to register themselves, as is with Nuffnang Awards (2009) which registered 150,000 blogs hosted on various platforms. One compelling reason for the inability to obtain accurate statistics on its size is that anonymity is an important part of the appeal of blogging, and it is expected that bloggers who do not want to be identified will not reveal their geographical locations or their real locations (Ulicny, 2008). Malaysian bloggers can run foul of the law for their blog contents especially if they blog about socio-political matters and are therefore more cautious about identifying themselves or revealing their geographical locations. Malaysians who started their blogs elsewhere in the world before coming back to Malaysia too may not have changed their geo-information when they are back, and the feature of being able to blog from anywhere in the world also makes it difficult to ascertain the size of the Malaysian blogosphere. However, as Rosenberg (2006, August 9) points out, "… it doesn't really matter. There's still a revolution going on."

Although political blogging monopolises the limelight as it gets wide coverage in the media and the issue is close to the hearts of multicultural and multi-ethnic Malaysians, research has shown that the blogging

platform is used in a variety of ways. The *Windows Live Spaces* (2006:4) research reveals that Asia's bloggers 'are primarily driven by the need to express themselves and to share their lives with family and friends'. It also reveals that 56% of Malaysian bloggers started their blogs primarily to express their views about things that matter a lot to them, and to express themselves in this liberated medium of expression.

The openness to blogging and to the usefulness of the Internet is seen in the number of Internet users which increased by more than 40% in 2008 (IndexMundi, 2011a) when the power of blogging voted three prominent bloggers from the opposition party into office in the 12th General Elections. Even the current Prime Minister of Malaysia, Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak, acknowledged the usefulness and effectiveness of new communication tools afforded through Internet facilities which effectively reach a wider and further audience, and has embraced this 21st century communication by having a personal website with blogging functions, an official Facebook page which has garnered 2,911,327 likes to date (2015, Dec 13), a YouTube channel to upload his work-related videos, a Twitter account with at least 2.6 million followers (2015, Dec 13), and a Flickr account to upload his photographs.

Besides socio-political blogs, other types of blogs that are popular amongst Malaysian bloggers are food blogs, travel blogs, photo blogs, technology blogs, and rant blogs. Further discussion on blogging continues in the next chapter.

2.5 Summary of Chapter Two

This chapter has provided in-depth background information on the history and the role of English language in multicultural, multilingual, and multi-ethnic Malaysia. This is instrumental in the birth of the Malaysian English varieties available which influence blog writing in the Malaysian blogosphere. It has also discussed what the Malaysian blogosphere is like. The information informs the data analysis of the blog writing of the participants in this study.

The next chapter reviews the literature pertaining to blogging and discusses some blogging issues. It also explores the issue of identity in the choice of language and linguistic features in blogging.

CHAPTER 3: BLOGGING

3.0 Introduction

Rapid developments in computer technology in the 20th and 21st centuries have resulted in human-computer-human communications (HCHC) becoming so powerful that they change the traditional understanding of communication and of building relationships. Early internet applications for the masses, such as casual computing, have now enormously expanded to include interactive and collaborative multi-modal applications where collaborative learning systems, multi-player online games, interactive workspaces and online social networking are the norms for interaction. The computer in its various manifestations has become a portal to a world beyond our physical one, opening up previously unimaginable possibilities which include allowing people's writing to be instantly published with virtually no red tape, resulting in authors' voices being heard by millions of people through the cyber-world.

In this chapter, I discuss a virtual platform for HCHC which was popularised in the 1990s and issues surrounding it. Blogging, which is engaged in many various ways by its practitioners, is generally used to share information, ideas and thoughts. The focus in this study, however, is on non-commercial personal blogging where, while exchanges of information, ideas and thoughts take place, the act is also a cathartic ritual for bloggers to express and transmit thoughts about their life.

3.1 Weblogs and Blogging

Blogs were originally link-driven sites comprising a mixture of links, commentary, personal thoughts, and journals which only people who had the technological know-how were able to create. *Wordpress.org*, a popular blogging platform, describes these as "websites that maintain an ongoing chronicle of information", featuring diary-type commentary and links to articles on other websites. When build-your-own-weblog tools were launched in 1999, they allow any interested individual to publish his or her blog with new-found convenience and ease. The blogging platform was then described in a broad spectrum definition as "A personal diary. A daily pulpit. A collaborative space. A political soapbox. A breaking-news outlet. A collection of links. Your own private thoughts. Memos to the world" (*Blogger.com*). Its user-friendly features, such as being time-place independent (Hutchings, 2002), contributed to the explosion of the blogging community in which bloggers pen their thoughts, interact, and share information. As Myers (2010:24) wrote, "bloggers read each other, linked to each other, developed [7]blogrolls", actions which rapidly expanded the community.

The basic character of blogs includes time-stamped posted entries in reverse-chronological format, owners' preferred format of signature, links to articles from other websites which the owners want to share, and links in

[7] A list of clickable links, usually placed in a side column of a blog. The links lead directly to other blogs which the author of the blog where the blogroll is found, reads or follows.

the blogroll (Blood, 2000; Hourihan, 2002). Optional features according to owners' preference include quotations, videos, audios, images, [8]*feedjits*, and allowance for personalised designs which give the owners a sense of ownership over their individualised blogs. It is easy to see why this platform draws bloggers.

Unlike other online public platforms, there is no word limit or editorial process imposed on blog writing. As such, blog authors enjoy the liberty of writing as much as they want in whatever format or form. The language in blogs thus reflects the author's writing in its natural, unedited state, being transmitted from their personal thoughts to blogs without intervention. It is such writing that is of interest in this research.

Besides its many well-known benefits to various areas such as business, education, professional development, and politics (Stiler & Philleo, 2003; Ward, 2004; Adenekan, 2005; Davis, 2006; Trammell, Williams, Postelnicu, & Landreville, 2006; Vethamani, 2006), the act of blogging itself is a form of 'youth subculture communication' and interaction which classrooms cannot cultivate nor replicate (Penrod, 2007:2). In Penrod's (2007) work with her teenage students, she discovered that her students created online personas to give them voice through their writing. Because their real identity need not be revealed in their blogs, blogging provides the opportunity for them to express themselves, for their voices to be heard

[8] Blog traffic monitor which allows the blog owner to see where the traffic is coming from and traffic statistics.

and for them to practise amateur journalism on things they are passionate about. There is limited research on the communication within the blog which reveals the blog practitioners' language use and linguistic features of their writing. This research hopes to add to the body of knowledge in this area.

Blog Genre

Herring, Scheidt, Bonus, & Wright (2004) identified three sub- blog genres – personal journals, filters (link-oriented sites), and k-logs (knowledge-logs) – according to the purpose of the blog.

In the post-*Blogger* era which favours journal-style blogging, the frequently updated entries are a record of the blogger's thoughts. The features include links which take the reader to another site mentioned in the content, full-blown conversations between a few blogs with each referencing the other, names which appear repeatedly in daily entries or listed in the sidebar of 'other weblogs', and *commentors'* references and reactions to the blogs they read most which position them in the community and affirm their membership through their sidebar list (Blood, 2000). This social interactivity takes the form of conversational-style exchanges within the blog. Because there is no restriction on the form of content posted on *Blogger*, the blogger can post anything. However, it must be mentioned that a blog can be shut down by its host server if it is deemed to have contravened the terms of agreement set out by the server. Such blogs are usually sexually offensive in nature.

Journal-type blogging is used for many purposes but most famously for online self-expression. In fact, findings from research on blogging reveal that the most popular topic among blog authors is their life and experiences (Herring, 2005; Lenhart & Fox, 2006; Schmidt, 2007). Some even argue that for people whose waking hours are spent almost entirely online, their link-driven sites are 'diaries' because life is the Web for them (Clark, 2002).

Halavais (2002, cited in Herring, et al., 2004) found that popular news stories were the most common topics of discussions in blogs while Krishnamurthy (2002) discovered that entries which were most insightful or controversial got the most comments. These support the predominant view of blogs as news filters and blogging as a highly interconnected activity.

Herring, et al. (2004) analysed 203 randomly-selected English language, text-based active weblogs from diverse sources to compare their observable features with popular claims about the nature of weblogs. Their analysis suggests that blogs are a hybrid genre which draws from multiple offline and online sources, opposing Blood's (2002c) claim that blogs are unique to the Web and not carried over from offline genres. They found that the journal blog is reproduced from the handwritten diary genre, the filter blog type has an offline precedent in editorials and letters to the editor in print newspapers, the k-logs resemble handwritten project journals which researchers record their observations and references, travel blogs resemble travelogues and photo albums, memory blogs

function like post-it notes, and blogs created for conversations resemble email exchanges which have antecedents in personal letters.

Herring, et al (2004:2) also concluded that blogs formed a "de facto bridge between multimedia HTML documents and text-based computer-mediated communication, blurring the traditional distinction between the two dominant Internet paradigms" as blogs share similarities with personal homepages and asynchronous discussion forums.

Having the characteristics of conventional diaries which are private in nature, yet often open to public viewing over the Web meant that blogs are multi-faceted and have reader- and self-oriented features (Kawaura et al, 1999, cited in Miura & Yamashita, 2007). The style of content in different types of blogs is dissimilar because of their different functions and purposes. Some classifications of blogs are based on the authors' conscious intention and expression content (Kawaura et al., 1998, cited in Miura & Yamashita, 2007) while others are based on whether they are personal, topical, individual, or communal (Krishnamurthy, 2002, cited in Miura & Yamashita, 2007).

Differences also exist depending on the profile of the writer, for example, Herring, Kouper, Scheidt and Wright (2004) found that diary style blogging correlates with hypothesized female authorial style, while filter style correlates with hypothesized male authorial style. Herring and Paolillo (2006) however discovered that it is not gender, but genre, which influences stylistic features. The diary entries contained more female

stylistic features, while the filter entries contained more male stylistic features, irrespective of author gender. The genre-feature interactions included first-person singular and first-person plural in journal entries which embody a first-person perspective, and third-person masculine, feminine, and plural, determiners, and *its* in filter entries which comments on events external to the writer. It is the genre's requirements which dictate such usage. Thus, each blog sub-genre dictates the stylistic features found in the respective sub-genres.

The Writing Style of Journal-type Blogs

Bloggers who use their blogs for self-expression use writing that is similar to writing diaries; narrating their life stories and seemingly addressing no one in particular. But unlike conventional diaries which are usually kept private under lock and key, blogs are public diaries and those which are not locked can be read by any Internet user who cares to read them (Papacharissi, 2004).

Nardi, Schiano, and Gumbrecht (2004), however, argue that personal journal type of blogs written by ordinary individuals for small audiences are more like radio shows than diaries, that bloggers while desiring readers, want controlled interaction. They posit that bloggers do not necessarily want a lot of feedback from their audience although they consider their attention, feedback and feelings as they write. In their research on 23 bloggers who were undergraduate or graduate students in American and European institutions of higher learning, they found that the

bloggers wanted to express themselves without the 'threat' of immediate feedback, liking the attention but not being personal. This fear of 'threat' was also discovered in Ong and Pemberton's (2009) blogger subjects. The bloggers were apprehensive of feedback on their writing while *commentors*, being themselves bloggers, tended to control their feedback so as not to negatively affect the bloggers' feelings. Nardi, Schiano, and Gumbrecht (2004) posit that bloggers could, like in a radio show, broadcast their choice of message without interruption, while the readers could only have minimal conversation through their comments. Minimising comments is possible in blogging which allows owners to set filters to screen out unwanted comments.

However, unlike radio shows, blog contents are at times not socially appropriate for public consumption. For example, the blog entitled *Sumptuous Erotica* by bloggers Alvin Tan and Vivian Lee came under fire for its sexually explicit content, shocking the Malaysian and Singaporean's conservative cultural fibre which prompted the National University of Singapore to withdraw Alvin's scholarship (The Star Online, 'NUS Terminates Sex Blogger's Scholarship', 2012, Oct 17; The Star Online, 'Porn Blog Couple Causes Furore', 2012, Nov 13). Although they were subsequently interviewed by a mainstream newspaper, such private matters would hardly, if ever, be allowed on radio shows in conservative cultures.

Like writing diaries, blogging is the act of transferring reflective thoughts into words, of sorting thoughts and thinking them through by 'penning' them down. Blogs are, therefore, a type of diary but with a perceived audience and with a larger role, straddling "the boundaries between publication and process, between writing towards others and writing for oneself" (Mortensen & Walker, 2002:256). While some do not care what feedback is received and therefore do not employ any editorial controls, others may not welcome unrestrained feedback and prefer to exercise control over their personal space. Depending on the individual blogger's preference, privacy settings in blogs allow for author's real identification to be kept private, control over who can view the blog, who has administrative rights over the blog, and who gets a copy of the blog posts through the e-mail. Though blogs are public, they are sometimes exclusive in that posts and comments are highly specific and exclude those who are not in the loop through a sort of secret code called 'social steganography' (boyd & Marwick, 2011). Radio shows, however, cannot do the same to their listeners.

Life in the Blogosphere as a 'Real Life'

Non-CMC practitioners generally regard life in the virtual world, in which practitioners engage, as one which is not real especially when contrasted with their 'real life' outside of the virtual world. Many scholars writing about CMC typically label life in the blogosphere as the 'online life' while the bloggers' offline life is referred to as their 'real life', to differentiate the fantasy offered by the online world from the reality of the offline culture as

we live it. This may be true of virtual worlds where users enter their avatars to engage in fantasy social interactions and competitions. However, the online world today runs parallel to the offline life of many people, offering them a real world where like-minded 'friends' understand and share real issues they face both in their online and offline lives, and provide them with real emotional or psychological support. It is as much a real world to these practitioners as is their offline life. Strauss (2009), an influential social web strategist and community builder, puts it as being "no less the real world than being on the phone". The people we speak to over the phone are real, so are the issues and solutions discussed over the phone. The media does not define real life but mediates relationships and causes contextual cultural shifts (Strauss, 2009). Referring to the offline life as 'real life' implies that the online experiences are not real life experiences for its practitioners, and is therefore misleading and inaccurate.

Online life has a culture of its own, where netizens form communities through real relationships with fellow netizens. Where pen-pal relationships once were built through written correspondence across the oceans, those relationships are now made more real, more alive, and more vivid through the constant, immediate, and frequent communication that the multi-modal media of CMC offers. For people who seemingly spend their entire lives online, their online lives are more meaningful and relevant to them than their offline existence (Clark, 2002, cited in Miller & Shepherd, 2004) and for many others, their offline life complements their online life where offline discussions are continued online, vice versa.

Blogging is often seen as an extension of an offline life where posts often contain highly specific and contextual information that is meaningful only to readers who are participants in the blogger's offline life, such as names of places and people (Trammell, Tarkowski, et al., 2006). More often than not, comments in the blogs come from people known to the blogger's offline environment who are privy to the events mentioned in the blog entries. Discussion regarding the events mentioned in the blog entries sometimes continue offline, and the 'broken off' blog conversation is easily identified through comments that are seemingly without context. Labelling the offline culture as 'real life', therefore, does not reflect the reality of life as it suggests that the online life is frivolous, a fantasy, and is not real.

This study recognises that bloggers who write about their experiences and the readers and commentors who read and respond to the writing are real humans whose thoughts and emotions are translated into words. It also recognises that the virtual world where friendships are formed, experiences are shared, and advice is dispensed, is as real as the offline culture. It therefore refers to life and situation not mediated through the computer as the offline life, and the one that is, as the online life. However, where applicable, 'real life' is used to refer to whichever world is more relevant to the person involved.

Blogging is a Social Action

Nardi, Schiano, and Gumbrecht (2004), and Brake (2009) observe that blogs are usually started for two main reasons: for self-expression and

social activity. Thurlow, et al. (2004) describes such online communities as social networks with nodes (actors) and connectors (relations between actors) and Myers (2010:30) refers to the act of linking as the 'currency' which helps form communities.

Zhou and Davis (2007) study the weblog link structure and found clustering patterns of communities within the whole network of communities with similar topics. By measuring the link strength between blogs, they discovered that a small circle with highly frequent interaction exists around each blog forming the basis for close-knitted blog communities. The more frequent the comments from the same *commentors*, the stronger the link. They also found that active *commentors* maintain a long relationship with certain blogs, thus prolonging the lifespan of those blog communities.

Marlow (2004) identified four subtypes of linking that are explicit weblog social connections: blogrolls, permalinks, comments, and trackbacks. The type of linking reflects the interaction or relationship. A blogroll is a 'read relationship' between the blogger and those on the list, in-text linking within a blog post cites another blogger's writing, while links created by *commentors* and trackbacks are 'response relationships' (Zhou & Davis, 2007). These build a sense of community in a complex but rather organised manner. They also credit the original contributor of the information; a native ethical and journalistic practice on the Web (Searls & Sifry, 2003).

Some argue, however, that communities cannot develop in blogs because the participants are not present at the same time and in the same place, and therefore not part of a conversation (Cory Ondrejka, Chief Technology Officer for *Second Life*, cited in Rettberg, 2008). Most blogs, especially personal ones, are personal in nature and tend not to be interlinked or to contain comments (Herring et al., 2005). Their opinion is supported by Mishne and Glance's (2006:3) analysis of weblog comments where their random sample of 500 weblogs shows that "over 80% of weblogs allow users to add comments to the posts, but only 28% of weblogs actually had comments posted". Nardi, Schiano, Gumbrecht, and Swartz (2004) concur that blogs in themselves are not sufficient for building a community. Citing two different cases, where blogs were created for educational purposes, the one created by a professor who posted periodic reports on a class project received almost no comments from her students while the other class blog which required students to post weekly blogs on assigned topics, read and comment on one another's posts resulted in students reporting that "blogging created a sense of community that would be less likely to emerge in a conventional classroom setting" (Nardi, Schiano, Gumbrecht, and Swartz, 2004:45). It can be concluded then that active contribution to the blog gave them a sense of ownership in that community and responsibility towards the blog to keep it going. There is also peer pressure to post on schedule knowing that others in the community are waiting to read their posts. This works for group blogs or class blogs which give members of the community administrative rights. In personal blogs, this sense of ownership is not possible for *commentors* as the author owns

the blog and posts on it while the *commentors* contribute through their comments. Furthermore, the owner has the liberty to exert gatekeeper powers to filter out unacceptable comments. Therefore, successful building of a blog community depends much on the linking as well as the interest created by the writing. The 'power law distribution' determines that blogs that already have power will get more (Shirky, 2003). If readers like the topics posted and the list of links in the blogroll, they may become not only readers but also long term *commentors*, forming a community. Bloggers who post interesting articles that appeal to blog readers sometimes become celebrity bloggers with large followings, which increase traffic to their blogs and bring revenue to the bloggers through the clicking on advertisements in their blogs. Hence, blogs are kept alive through this symbiotic relationship where the bloggers offer interesting and informative posts and the readers take the effort to visit the blogs to read the entries, post comments, or click on the advertisement banners. The combination of multiple factors which determine the successful building of a blog community includes topic appeal, substance and credibility of the writing, writing style, atmosphere of the rapport, frequency of the updates, and linking, which can keep conversations alive for years.

Blogging is powerfully fuelled by a personal need for self-expression (Papacharissi, 2004; Trammell, Tarkowski, Hofmokl, & Sapp, 2006) and for social interaction (Kawaura et al., 1999, cited in Miura & Yamashita, 2007; Olcon, 2003, cited in Trammell, Tarkowski, Hofmokl, & Sapp, 2006;

Papacharissi, 2004; Trammell, 2004). Individuals can establish links with online audiences and showcase their identity through blogging (Smith, 1998, cited in Papacharissi, 2004). These are among the five major motivations for blogging - "documenting one's life; expressing deeply felt emotions; articulating ideas through writing; providing commentary and opinions; and forming and maintaining community forums" - discovered by Nardi, Schiano, Gumbrecht, and Swartz (2004:43). Other motivations include positive feedback, discovered by Miura and Yamashita (2007:1452) who found that "communication with readers who gave positive feedback strongly encouraged blog authors to continue writing". These research and their findings also provide impetus for the current investigation into the Malaysian context to discover their blogging practices.

As the current study also investigates the varieties of language and linguistic features used by the bloggers which reveal their sense of self-identity and how they identify themselves with the world, it is necessary to explore the issue of identity in the choice of language, varieties of language, and linguistic features in blogs in the next section.

3.2 Identity and Language Use

3.2.1 Defining Identity

Identity is a complex notion because of its multi-faceted and changeable nature which is subject to the circumstances in which the individual finds himself or herself. The number of interlinked levels at which identity exists,

such as national/cultural, ethnic, collective, and personal, also gives rise to various definitions and understanding of identity from various disciplines. Joseph (2004) categorised identity into three pairs of subtypes: one of real people and one for fictional characters; one for oneself and one for others, one for individuals and one for groups. How we are identified by one category can be entirely different from how we are depicted by another category simply because we portray ourselves differently in different categories.

Social psychologist, Hecht, conceptualises identity as a multi-layered construct (Faulkner & Hecht, 2007) in his Communication Theory of Identity (CTI), where identity is both a sense of self (*personal identity*) where the self alone determines his or her identity, and communication of self to the society around him or her. Drawing on social identity theory that identity is based on social categorisation and shared group memberships (Turner, 1991), CTI views the person's social behaviour as an aspect of self, the *enacted identity* which is expressed through social interaction where each who encounters the individual constructs their own interpretation. Joseph (2004:82) however, evaluated this distinction between the personal and enacted identity as being blur because ultimately, ''we need to account for the self as both producer and consumer of its own enacted identities'' and gave the example of how common it is for people to express how they think others have seen them or how they think they have portrayed themselves in a particular social situation. Hecht's third layer of identity, the *relational identity,* is a discursive process co-created through roles,

other people's ascriptions, and social constructions and performances (Banton, 1965; Goffman, 1967, in Faulkner & Hecht, 2007). This is identity in reference to each other, when a person or group is identified by virtue of being different from another person or another group. Finally, identity as a communal frame which is defined by the group or collectivities, where the identity is not on the individual or relationship but the group (Philipsen, 1987; Middleton & Edwards, 1990, cited in Hecht, Jackson, & Ribeau, 2003:237). This identity can best be seen in communal actions such as group rituals and practices.

Though there are many different identities, the underlying basis is always the relationship with self and relationship with others as they all refer to "how people understand their relationship to the world, how that relationship is constructed across time and space, and how people understand their possibilities for the future" (Norton, 1997:410). Self-identity which is manifested by voice is who we know ourselves to be and our sense of self apart from others (personal identity), and what about the self we want others to know about (self-identity which we construct for others). It could be as simple as our name, which carries a deictic function, or as difficult as who we really are deep down, which gives a semantic function of identity (Joseph, 2004).

The perception of identity as an ongoing process of knowing the self, as a continuous attempt to maintain a sense of balance between being a part of the self's surroundings and being apart from them, is a poststructuralist

view of human beings who constantly struggle to reconcile their present sense of self with their past accumulated experiences and knowledge in preparation to deal with what awaits them in the future (Bauman, 1991; Giddens, 1991; Simmel, 1950, in Block, 2006b). Poststructuralists view identity as something that is not fixed but liquid, through a process that is conflictive in nature, leading to feelings of ambivalence where the self does not quite become half of what he/she was and half of what he/she has been exposed to but occupies a 'third place' (Bhabha, 1994; Hall, 1996 in Block, 2006b) where ''elements encounter and transform each other'' (Papastergiadis, 2000:170 in Block, 2006b). Identity is thus seen as a self-conscious choice by the individual, who exerts his/her identity even in the most extreme of life conditions (Giddens, 1991).

This understanding of identity was critiqued by May (2001, in Block, 2006b) who argued that the 'third place' concept and hybridity assume that all choices are possible when in fact they are circumscribed by social and political categories. Matthews (2000) explains this by describing the individual's choice of identity as picking aspects of their lives such as food, lifestyle, practices, spirituality and beliefs, from a 'cultural supermarket' made available by international media and advanced technology. They then 'assume' their choice of identity and work on it within the social structures the individuals exist. Although individuals are not forced into an identity, their social constructs such as ethnic affiliation and cultural practices determine part of their identity. This identity takes place at the crossroads of structure and agency, where the individuals' personal

choices and inclinations have to be exercised within the social constructs surrounding them (Block, 2006b). Tension arises from this lack of total freedom to choose, which Matthews (2000) found to be especially acute in a globalised culture. In his study of Japanese artists, American religious seekers, and Hong Kong intellectuals before and after the handover to China, they faced tension as they try to define themselves against their particular cultural background as well as information and knowledge from the global cultural supermarket. However, Matthews (2000:9) also argues that the strongest force of identity today is one that is proferred through the market, where "market identity is based on belonging to no particular place", or on ethnicity, culture, or nation, but where one's home is all the world. As we pick our choices, we endlessly shift and weave and recreate ourselves, "becoming fluid and many-sided" (Lifton, 1993, cited in Matthews, 2000:12).

The questions then, are how we construct our senses of identity, how we decide who we are and how we want the world to perceive us. Matthews (2000:12) believes that there is a universal basis of self, "made up of past memories and future anticipation linked to an ever-shifting present" through cultural shaping that takes place at three levels. At the deepest level, the particular language in which we think in and the set of social practices condition us to how we comprehend self and world. The middle level is the social and institutional pressures that the self cannot fully resist, and the shallowest and conscious level is where the individual has full control to freely pick and choose the ideas they want to live by although in

reality their choice is not entirely free. Our sense of identity, then, is not a totally free choice which we have full control over, but one in which our choices (agency) are made within our membership in the world (social constructs) in ongoing interactions with others. As others construct their version of our identity based on what they have observed of us and their accumulated experience with us, there can be many versions of 'me' or our identity out there (Lee, S.K.,2003; Joseph, 2004).

Tajfel's (1978) Social Identity Theory states that an individual has multiple social identities where the individual's self-concept (membership together with the value and emotional significance attached to it) is what counts and not the nature of the group itself. In other words, the individual's perception of their relationship to the group determines their social identity where they assume the identity and then works on it. As the individual belongs to several social groups, they then have several social identities which correspond to their perceived membership of social groups (Hogg & Vaughan, 2002) and their identities shift according to the context of who it is they are with (Joseph, 2004).

An essential ingredient in this is shared norms and beliefs, which is manifested through the habits of social life, including language (Billig, 1995). The role of language in the social construction of identity is emphasised by Smuts (1927, in Joseph, 2004), who expressed that language gave name to items in his experiences and made his experiences meaningful, which otherwise would have remained as mere experiences.

However, language does not entirely determine how we conceive of a person, but how they speak and what they say does play a very fundamental role. This relationship between identity and language is discussed in the next section of this chapter.

3.2.2 Locating Identity in Language

The view that identity is rooted in language has been supported by many, especially in studies on ethnic, racial, national, and religious identities (Le Page & Tabouret-Keller, 1985; Norton, 1997; Wodak, et. al., 1999; Ooi, 2001; Joseph, 2004; Huffaker & Calvert, 2005; Stroud & Wee, 2005; Hiles, 2007; Schmidt, 2008). Joseph (2010:9) points out that "in reality, our very sense of who we are, where we belong and why, and how we relate to those around us, all have language at their centre". The language or varieties of language we choose to use and the manner in which we use them in different situations and with different people, are important indications of our identity and vital means by which others 'identify' us, our attitude, our perspectives, and inclinations. This choice of language is always in a state of flux, highly dependent on interactive contexts and on the interactants, as individuals constantly negotiate and re-negotiate according to the circumstances they are faced with (Billig, 1995; Lee, S.K., 2003). How successful the construction of their identity depends on their skill in negotiating the circumstances they are in. This relationship between one's sense of self and different means of communication, be it a language, a dialect or sociolect, is referred to as language identity (Block, 2006a). Especially where dialect differences are concerned, they fulfil not

only the function of communication but also that of social belonging (Joseph, 2010). Information about the speakers is communicated through their word choice, intonation patterns and ways of speaking as we are able to instinctively interpret one another's background – origin, social class, level of education, trustworthiness. In what situation and with whom we use it further reveals our inclinations, attitude towards and perception of the group we are engaging with (Lee, S.K., 2003). As Dunbar (1996, in Joseph, 2010:10) observes, language "allows you to say a great deal about yourself, your likes and dislikes, the kind of person you are". Language provides us membership to the community, allowing us to share knowledge and experiences (Dunbar, 2011). Joseph (2010) also points out that even in text messaging and emails from strangers, the sender's identity can be constructed from subtle signals in the message. This helps us to decide whether to discard the emails with no further thought or to pay attention to it.

Thus, our choice of language and variety of language provides others a way to map us out and identify us. However, this can present a problem especially for authors of other ethnic backgrounds who wish to express their identity while writing in English and those responsible for educational programmes who have to decide whether to use Standard English for a worldwide readership or the regional norms to portray a more authentic and personal voice, for example, South Asian English or English of the Indian subcontinent authors. The Indian writer Raja Rao was quoted as saying "Our method of expression has to be a dialect which will someday

prove to be as distinctive and colourful as the Irish or the American ... The tempo of Indian life must be infused into our English expression'' (Crystal, 2003:360). This echoes Chinua Achebe's sentiments when he stated that ''English must carry the weight of my African experience. It will be a new English, still in communion with its ancestral home, but altered to suit her new surroundings'', expressing his attitude towards the language (Achebe, 1976, cited in Thiong'o, 1987; Samuel, 2000:30; Wroe, 2012). There is clearly a rejection of English in its traditional or colonial form but a desire to blend it to give it a local identity. The local variety or the regional norm of English is seen as exuding the identity of its users, giving them a personal voice, the expression of their identity and individuality through language. Gabriel Okara (cited in Thiong'o, 1987:9) explains that this way of writing English should not be regarded as a desecration of the language, but that they ''add life and vigour to the language while reflecting their own respective cultures … to express their own ideas, thinking and philosophy in their own way''.

In trying to understand how people establish and manifest identity in their language, Milroy (1980) found that there is a relationship between language and network, that forms of linguistic variables which a person chooses to use depend on the person's degree of integration into his/her informal social relationships or 'social network'. She found that the tendency to conform to non-standard vernacular forms of speech is especially strong where close-knit localised network structures existed, not merely in adolescent groups but also among the adult community.

Among other studies with similar findings, Milroy quoted Labov's (1972b), Gumperz's (1976b), and Le Page's (1979) to point out that the inner workings of the social network depended not only on the amount of personal contact but rather that the members of a social network had shared norms, behavioural tendencies, and systems of belief including language. This shared belief binds them together even if they have never met or never come into direct physical contact with one another, such as in 'imagined communities' (Anderson, 1991), 'interpretative communities' (Fish, 1980), or 'communities of practice' (Wenger, 1998). However, Joseph (2004) pointed out that Milroy did not explore the nature of the identity which emerged from the network, or whether it could be that the identity created the network instead of the other way round.

Social psychologists perceive that the way we speak is partly conditioned by the people we are speaking to and that our use of language is affected by our perception of the people we are speaking with. Explained in Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT), first known as Speech Accommodation Theory developed by Giles in 1971, it is believed that we deliberately and subconsciously modify our language patterns to the style used by our interactants as a subconscious motivation for social approval, for strengthening the bond or to identify with them, in what is known as a 'convergence' strategy. The reverse, a 'divergence', also happens when we deliberately assert our identity by adjusting our language patterns away from those of our interactants (Giles & Baker, 2008). Giles et al. (1973, cited in Giles et al., 1991) found that bilingual speakers were evaluated

more favourably when they accommodate to the speech of their interactants, showing that adjusting one's speech to match one's conversation partner's speech can influence the social evaluation of the speaker. This strengthens Shepard, Giles and LePoire's (2001) claim that language behaviour is affected by both social and cognitive processes, and that it is individual motivation that directs speech behaviour.

National languages also arise in connection with national identities, establishing language standards which are shaped by its speakers' views of who they are, such as evident in the many varieties of English used and accepted in various parts of the world. This language-identity relationship is then a two-way street; a case of agency over constructs and constructs over agency (Lee, S.K., 2003).

There is a difference in the case of the ME varieties. The colloquial varieties are spoken by both Malaysians who are able to use a standard variety but who intentionally use the colloquial varieties, and those who use it because it is the only variety of English they can speak (Morais, 2000; Nair-Venugopal, 2003). Moreover, acceptance of the ME varieties, especially the colloquial varieties, is still an issue even among those who use them, perceiving the ME varieties to be of a lower status (frodonet, 2009, Feb 12; Yeow, 2009, Jul 21). The number of ME varieties in existence further compounds this issue. ME encompasses several varieties which are loosely categorised into three levels – the acrolectal level (SME) consisting of the standard variety, the mesolectal level (CME) consisting of the

colloquial varieties with differing linguistic features according to regional and ethnic background (Pillai, 2012), and the basilectal level (BME) consisting of varieties normally spoken in the streets (Baskaran, 2005). The frequently posed question is whether the CME and BME varieties are chosen because the users are unable to handle a standard variety or whether the varieties are intentionally used as an identity marker (Gaudart, 2000), and if so, what identity is it. The other question is whether the ME varieties, especially the non-standard varieties, are acceptable in situations deemed as formal such as at the workplace or at meetings, and on public platforms such as the media. To this day, this issue continues to be debated on in Malaysia.

Deciding on the choice of ME varieties depends on a number of factors such as the varieties in the speakers' repertoire, the relationship of the users, the platforms and situations they are used in (Azirah & Norizah, 2006). English-speaking Malaysians who are unable to handle SME frequently use CME and BME varieties when they are required to speak in English, while those who choose to use CME and BME despite being able to use SME, do so with various objectives in mind, such as to exude their Malaysian identity or as a tool for acceptance or for distancing. Political writer Syed Hussein Alattas (1997) defended his book, *The Five Hundred Million Dollarman*, which was written in ME by saying, "This is my English, my Malaysian English. It is the voice of the street. I don't write for academic people".

Expressing cultural identity through the use of ME is also commonly found among young people in Malaysia who use it with much pride (Preshous, 2001, cited in Rajadurai, 2004; Azirah, 2002). They tend to switch among the ME varieties for various reasons, depending on how they want to portray themselves and how they relate to the social world around them. CME is the preferred choice when exhibiting solidarity and camaraderie, and this is found even among highly proficient speakers of English (Rajadurai, 2004). Nair-Venugopal (2000b) too, found conscious acts of identity, i.e. those which were socially motivated, were signalled through code-mixing, code-switching, lexical shifts, and culturally derived expressions. There is a sense of pride and affinity when using this localised variety of English especially in the spoken form because of the distinct accent. This conscious acts of identity is also found in the written form, especially in interactive written communication on the Internet, expressed through the use of certain Internet language conventions, such as irregular or accentuated spelling to reflect the pronunciation and accent as used in the spoken forms, non-English particles and borrowed words which are loaded with cultural meanings and connotations not deliverable through the use of what is commonly termed as 'proper' English among Malaysians.

According to Canagarajah (1999:2), people in postcolonial contexts "find ways to negotiate, alter and oppose political structures, and reconstruct their languages, cultures and identities to their advantage. The intention is not to *reject* English, but to *reconstitute* it in more inclusive, ethical, and democratic terms". Even in literary writing, "the colonized writer leaves an

imprint of himself/herself in the language, changing the texture and flavour of English, imbuing it with the heat and dust of the imperial fringe, eventually possessing it'' (Roxas-Tope, 1998:26).

The use of modern technology has enabled this 'linguistic hybridity' (Pennycook, 2001) to spread much wider and faster. This global spread of English where English adapts to local languages and cultures giving rise to different varieties of English presents a problem for approaches in language education where the informal use of English, such as in code-switching, is not learnt through formal, classroom contexts, but through sociolinguistic exchanges among youth subcultures as an expression of sub-cultural identity and style (Preisler, 1999). Indeed, usage of unconventional English has been attributed to young people, who are more passionate about expressing their identity. Even among Malaysian youths whose L1 is English, incidences of hybrid terms appear. David (2000) found code-mixed terms such as *cheapo* (cheapskate), *stingko* (smelly), *lepaking* (playing truant), borrowed terms such as *lansi* (show off), terms with semantic extensions such as *up there* (self-importance) and *wasted sperm* (good-for-nothing), in their spontaneous informal interactions and at times even in formal interactions. Malaysian youths whose English is L2 also contributed to this phenomena, favouring shorter English words such as *frus* (frustration), *laib* (library), *fantas* (fantastic) and tacit euphemisms which are borrowed from library terms like 'red spot' (popular girls) and 'open shelf' (girls who are not as popular) (Nik Safiah Karim, 1973, cited in David, 2000). The fact that these words reflecting

campus and academic life are found among undergraduates supports the view that our environment does mould the language we use, and the language we use in turn reflects our voice and identifies us. However, it must be mentioned that to this day, acceptance of the local varieties in Malaysia remains a contentious issue that occasionally makes it to the front page news.

Disagreements notwithstanding, this linguistic hybridity and varieties of ME continue to be used in both the public sphere as well as in the written interactive communication on the Internet. That young Malaysian bloggers are using the ME varieties on a platform, where not all its users can understand ME, warrant investigation. More studies have been done on varieties of Singapore English which, due to the geographical proximity of the two countries and the demographics of their users, bear a strong resemblance to varieties of ME. Studies on varieties of ME have been done to a lesser extent and this research aims to augment current and existing literature on the varieties of ME through a study of their use on the Internet. The next section discusses Internet language and blog language.

3.3 Internet Language

3.3.1 Characteristics of Language on the Internet

Technological advancements have profoundly affected all areas of human life including the way language is used. 'Netspeak' is a term coined by Crystal (2001) to distinguish the medium of communication used on the Internet (electronic discourse) which is different in features from the long

established tradition of spoken and written language. By coining this term which is sometimes also known as 'Weblish' and 'Netlish' (Crystal, 2003:424), Crystal claims that Internet language has its own characteristics which deserves a name of its own. He predicted that this new medium would be much more popular than the traditional spoken and written language, and therefore would be worth studying due to its potential as the 'biggest language revolution ever'. The explosion of communication technology and its huge following of users and practitioners from almost all corners of the world made his prediction a reality. With an 'evolving multilingual character' that is constantly and rapidly changing in line with its technology, the Internet language emerges as a new range of language varieties. For example, text-based emoticons, such as **:-)** and **:-0** which represent smiling and surprise, were used to represent the author's emotions before the birth of the equivalent graphic emoticons, such as  and . The availability of such modes of expressions revolutionised the way CMC interactants express themselves on the Internet, regardless of the language used. Creativity and imagination in using text and punctuation as icons to represent emotions were born out of necessity in online interactions where face-to-face features of communication are missing. Within this new variety exists variations, depending on personal preference, the particular online community or part of the world where it is used.

Another well-known feature of Netspeak which reflects linguistic ingenuity is the brevity of expression, originally used in texting (*txtng*) or sending

short messages through short messaging services (SMS) provided by telecommunications providers. A list of such abbreviations in English provided by Crystal (2003) includes common ones that are easily decipherable such as *gr8* (great) and *btw* (by the way), and uncommon ones which may appear gibberish to those who are not familiar with Internet language, such as *afaik* (as far as I know) and *icwum* (I see what you mean). So popular are they that this core feature of texting took "less than five years to emerge as a new and identifiable variety of English" (Crystal, 2003:425), a record in the history of English language evolution. The abbreviations are coined in many ways such as using a combination of letter-number to replace a word (*b4* – before, *2moro* - tomorrow), using sounds of letters to replace words (*y* – why, *cu* – see you), initialisms (*BFN* – bye for now, *LOL* – laugh out loud), acronyms (*IMHO* – in my humble opinion, *LMAO* – laugh my ass off), unique spelling to truncate words (*dat* – that, dun – don't), shortened syllables (*dy* – already), and omission of non-content words or note taking style of writing (*where u going* – Where are you going?).

In certain types of CMC where graphic-based emoticons are not supported and text-based emoticons are not sufficient to convey the message, descriptive action words are used instead. These are usually indicated by use of an asterisk before and an asterisk after such words, for example, *high five* to indicate the celebratory hand gesture and *looking faint* to indicate the feeling of being overwhelmed. This feature of Netspeak sends

a strong visual message to the reader, making it highly effective to drive across a message without it being misinterpreted.

Internet communication has also given rise to a lexicon of Netspeak which has expanded the English vocabulary, as well as the vocabulary of other languages for translated terms. Words such as *flaming*, *spam*, *offline*, *online*, *ping*, *twit*, *netizen*, *widget*, *feedjit*, *RSS Feed*, to name but a few, were birthed on the Internet with some entering the general vocabulary, while extension of meanings were given to existing words to describe concepts used on the Internet such as *post*, *chat*, *surfers*, *trackback*, (online) *friends*, and *followers*. Crystal (2003) gave the example of "I'll ping you later" (I'll get in touch with you later) as Netspeak being used in offline conversation.

Netspeak lexicon is distinctive, bearing marks of innovative word-creation such as compounding words (*webcam*, *freeware*), blending (*infonet*, *fugly*, *netiquette*), and changing word-class (*to mouseover* – to move the cursor over a particular area on the screen, *to google* – to obtain information on the Web using the Google search engine). These and other Netspeak features are here to stay as CMC has become an essential part of everyday life, an up-to-date and necessary addition to established traditions of communication.

3.3.2 Blog Language and Voice

In blogs, the writing forms are made up of a combination of genres that are familiar and already in use to make up for lack of face-to-face interactional features such as intonation, volume, and non-verbal facial expressions. A

combination of spoken and written genres is used because of the interactive nature of blogs and this is dependent on the category of the blog and who the particular blog community is made up of. Part of the attraction of blogging is due to the characteristics of the blogging genre which is "part conversation, part diary, part narrative, part letter, and part newspaper article" (Penrod, 2007:44). While in general, the language in the blog entry differs from that in the comments section of the blog in terms of register, style, vocabulary, and grammar, a greater informality in the conversational style as well as a lesser regard for grammar can be seen in the comments section.

Having said that, however, there isn't a strict convention of language to be followed in blogging. Even if there is, bloggers would not necessarily abide by it as the blogging gives them the freedom to write as they like. Nevertheless, there exists a constant struggle between standardization and innovation (D'Souza, 1993), or 'convention and voice' (Samuel, 2000:29) as bloggers seek to strike a balance between conforming to features of form which are normative within the community (social/group identity) and expression of their identity and individuality (self/personal identity) through language. Those whose content and language are in extreme contradiction to established normative forms find themselves being 'censored' by either the community or the authorities in the community, for example, the author of the blog '*Gutter Uncensored*' who had his blog blocked numerous times by Internet service providers (ISPs) for the types of pictures and the invalidated news he posted. Nevertheless, people are

constantly seeking to have their voices heard and their thoughts expressed, and the Internet seems to be a platform that is less regulated than other established media.

But what is voice and how is it related to identity? Identity is about who we are which allow others to mark us as unique individuals and who we are in relation to others, marking us out as belonging to social groups with social identities (Llamas & Watt, 2010). Voice is a lot more personal than that. It is the combination of the person's attitude, personality and character which convey the story (Moore, 2012, Wiehardt, undated), and their beliefs and feelings about a subject that is conveyed to a certain audience (Hickey, 1992 in Pattison, 2007). As Wallace (2013, Mar 7) puts it in a dramatic way in her blog on writing, voice is "the nameless fire that burns inside, turning up the heat, licking at mind and heart until it becomes unbearable to wait even a single moment longer before putting pen to paper or fingertips to keyboard".

Voice is therefore the whole package of our personality which expresses our identity, personality, intentions, emotions and attitudes, shaped by class, cultural, racial and gender identities through our personal histories of engagement with our surroundings (Leistyna, Woodrum & Sherblom, 1996). Voice, whether conscious or unconscious, is realised through the choice of words and expressions, and the style of communication and variety of language used. In blogs, the voice comes through especially in personal blogs and those which revolve around themes such as political and socio-economic matters. The whole idea of narrative blogging and of

having a blog is to have an outlet for one's voice to be heard, one's individuality and identity to be expressed through the words, the design, the structure, and the organisation of the blog. In short, the whole setup of a person's blog expresses the author's identity and individuality, be it a real or a fictitious identity. An evaluation of such writings can provide an idea or sense of the writer and his or her mental makeup. However, an author's voice in blogs, especially if the author has developed a persona in the blog, can sometimes prevent him from expressing his true voice or what he really wants to write. Dr Crazy, who constructed what she said was "a voice that was brash, at times caustic, at times inappropriate" (Dr. Crazy, 4 Jan 2006), stopped posting to her blog when she found herself hemmed in by the space she had created in the blogosphere, with a pseudonym that limited her because her voice in the blog "has stripped me of all authority (and of all ability to defend my positions) about the professional". Thus, an author's voice in the blog can be influenced or altered over time and does not necessarily reflect the author's true voice.

The language in blogs as well as in other online communication also reveals characteristics which are attributed to the gender identity of the writer. Huffaker and Calvert (2005:1), in their research on blogs of both male and female teenagers, found that "males more so than females used emoticons, employed an active and resolute style of language, and were more likely to present themselves as gay", suggesting that they were comfortable about revealing their sexual identity online and discussing what they might not be able to with their families and offline peers

(Grotevant, 1998 in Huffaker & Calvert, 2005). In a virtual world where anonymity is afforded, there is a sense of safety from prejudices that allows users to lower their fences and reveal their true selves albeit through the personae they assume.

On the other hand, research has also shown the opposite, i.e. females use more emoticons to express emotions in their online communication (Witmer & Katzman, 1997, cited in Huffaker & Calvert, 2005) in order to appear less offensive and to express friendliness (Ong & Pemberton, 2009), consistent with teenage males' tendency to deny their feelings (Ruble & Martin, 1998, cited in Huffaker & Calvert, 2005), while Lee, C. (2003, cited in Huffaker & Calvert, 2005) found that males do use emoticons in their online communication with females but rarely with other males.

Style of language between the genders also differs. Tannen's (1995) research reveals that males use a direct and forceful style while females use a more indirect and intimate style of interaction, and Herring (2000) who has done substantial research in this area found that women are more likely to appreciate, apologise, and be upset by violations of politeness. However, online communication does not necessarily express gender in binary opposition because 'virtuality' allows more freedom and flexibility, making language use flexible, dynamic (Rodino, 1997, cited in Huffaker & Calvert, 2005), and more androgynous. There were also claims that men's postings received more comments than women's (Ratliff, 2006; Pedersen & Macafee, 2007) and that a greater amount of attention is accorded to male

bloggers in the mass media (Herring, Kouper, Scheidt, & Wright, 2004). However, where celebrity bloggers are concerned, female Asian blogs too have huge followings and a sizeable number of responses (see http://xiaxue.blogspot.com, http://stickgal.blogspot.com, http://clapbangkiss.xanga.com, and http://cheeserland.com). In fact, some female blog writings reveal more confident and aggressive language and extreme violations of politeness which are usually attributed to male writers and thus contradict ideas about gender writing. Online communication patterns reveal more than just gender, they also reveal the communicator's attitude, disposition, identity, and voice.

Using varieties of English which are mutually intelligible within the culture but not necessarily with the rest of the world to express attitude toward and perspectives of the language is evident in Malaysian personal blogs. As the blogging genre is "part conversation, part diary, part narrative, part letter, and part newspaper article" (Penrod, 2007:44), the communication experience that takes place in offline life is transferred into the online blogging platform, together with its spoken conventions. The bloggers determine the variety of language used in their blogs, taking into consideration their readers and their own standards for themselves, practising self-censorship and censorship from their readers. We therefore see their voice coming through the contents of their blog and through the choice of language varieties used.

In the different varieties of English spoken especially in multilingual contexts, code-switching and code-mixing are very common phenomena where the multiple identities of the speakers are expressed (Koo, 2005). These phenomena are also expressed in the blogosphere. Smedley (2006) studied blogs written by Filipinos who blogged in English and he found that their blogs demonstrated a strong sense of identity through the use of code switching. He studied the narrative structure of the blog and examined how blog writers applied code-switching as a means of textual communication. Perhaps, like what Bosire (2006) discovered among Kenyan Americans, code-switching was a way for the community to strengthen their ties with one another and mark their membership by maintaining their migrant identity through their linguistic legacy. Bosire (2006) found that there was the perception that if Kenyans chose to use American English instead of Kenyan English when conversing with Kenyans, they were in fact expressing despise for their own culture.

Meanwhile, Ramlee and Wong (2009) conducted a study of readers' perception of top-ranked Malaysian blogs in their use of English language in their blogs. Although the study was to discover the dynamics of their language use in the blogs, the data was not derived from the perception of the researchers themselves but from participant-readers. The bloggers who wrote the blogs were not engaged in the research. Although the researchers reported that their respondents agreed that "the bloggers use code-switching most of the time" (2009:53-54), they also wrote that "the majority of the respondents believe that the four Malaysian blogs used

Standard English most of the time" (2009:59). This conflicting report seems to suggest that the researchers accept frequent code-switching as a feature of Standard English when used within the electronic environment of the blogosphere, where the unique pattern of discourse is conversational language produced in written texts. Ramlee and Wong (2009) further suggest that these strategies were used by the bloggers to communicate in a more informal manner with their multilingual readers and to strengthen the camaraderie and kinship in the context of the Malaysian blogging community. The code-switching and code-mixing were used to express their Malaysian identity. The choice of ME variety would depend much on the blogger and the context of the blog, and therefore, from the social constructivist point of view, the bloggers in Ramlee and Wong's (2009) study should have been engaged to account for the way in which their writing was socially constructed. It is this stand that the current study takes in considering the active participation and thoughts of the bloggers on their use of English in their blogs. The current study also differs from Ramlee and Wong's (2009) in that the blogs were not top-ranked Malaysian blogs.

In his research on the use of Taglish (Tagalog-English) on the blogs, Smedley (2006) found that the average ratio of code-switching Tagalog to English in the 25 blogs he analysed was close to 50:50. He surmises that Taglish is the choice in weblog entries and that the act of code-switching by a blogger simply highlights that language use remains interactive even though face-to-face interaction is absent. In trying to answer the question of

why blog writers code-switch in non-conversational contexts where there is no direct addressee, Smedley (2006) found that the blogger switched to English in their written narratives when wishing to disassociate themselves from what they were writing, creating an emotional distance, while switching to their mother tongue when wishing to take a more personal and emotionally involved stance. Amongst other findings, he also found that code-switching contributed to a coherent sense of self, where some of his respondents who were members of the overseas Filipino diaspora tended to use Taglish to make sense of their Filipino identity while others who rejected some Filipino values which hindered their self-fulfilment tended to use English in their blog narratives.

The common strand in the findings of these research studies is the use of code-switching in blogs to negotiate and construct identity, and to position self in relation to others. It is a case of multilinguals engaging their linguistic repertoire to help them make sense of self in the pluralistic blogosphere. Would Malaysian bloggers' code-switching reveal the same pattern? The current study hopes to find out.

3.4 Summary of Chapter Three

This chapter has reviewed the literature pertaining to the blogging phenomenon and issues surrounding its genre. It discussed briefly the motivation to blog, Internet language, blog language and the issue of identity in the choice of language varieties and linguistic features in blogging. This discussion is necessary in order to make sense of the data

on how young Malaysian bloggers are communicating their messages and defining their space in the blogosphere and how their choice of language varieties are language strategies to make meaningful messages which at the same time reveal their perception of themselves as users of English.

The next chapter provides information on how the data was collected and analysed.

CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.0 Introduction

This chapter provides a rationale for the social-constructivist framework adopted and details the research design of the empirical study and methods that were employed in the collection and analysis of the three sets of data, obtained to assist in understanding the blog communication of young Malaysian speakers of English who blogged mainly in English. The first part of the chapter is a discussion of the philosophical positioning of this research which informs the rationale for the choice of data collection methods. Subsequent sections detail the research premise, instrumentation, research procedure, selection of interview participants and blogs, pilot tests, data analysis and research ethics.

4.1 Philosophical Perspectives

Knowledge of the world is both discovered and constructed. Take, for example, knowledge of the universe, the solar system, and the outer space. Some aspects were discovered, some are still in the state of being discovered, and some have not yet been discovered. They exist, *a priori*, whether human beings are aware of their existence or not. However, in the case of the blogosphere, it was constructed and conceived of human cognition and knowledge of how it is used and of what activities go on

within it. The blogosphere is constructed on an ongoing basis by social actors who fashion, modify, and transform it as they go.

The epistemological question of what human knowledge is relates to our assumptions about reality which explain how we know what we know (Crotty, 1998). For example, constructivists assert that the nature of knowledge is socially constructed; that social actors construct knowledge of social phenomena and play a major role in fashioning it through their choices. This social constructivist approach is underpinned by Berger and Luckmann's (1966) ideas on the social construction of knowledge where knowledge is defined as 'the certainty that phenomena are real and that they possess specific characteristics' (1966:13). Knowledge and reality are not only discovered or made known, but also reinforced and changed by members of society. As the phenomenologist Heidegger (1927/1962, cited in Overgaard & Zahavi, 2009:95) puts it, 'a human being is not primarily a spectator on its environing world, but an agent in it'. As social agents, we shape reality not by responding to situations themselves but by responding to our interpretations and definitions of situations. And how we respond is influenced by many factors such as interpersonal relationship, interaction, group affiliation, culture, and history (Newman & O'Brien, 2013). Knowledge is also a collaborative process where social actors engage with other social actors to refine their thinking or improve their performance, developing and actively maintaining knowing in a social context (Schutz, 1964, cited in Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Vygotsky, 1930-1934/1978; Overgaard & Zahavi, 2009). The current study adopts the

approach that knowledge is a collaborative process of co-construction where meaning and understanding result from social encounters, and therefore, it would be incomplete without the input of the social actors who are involved in the use of a technology to connect.

The social phenomenon of blogging, which includes all activities in the constantly expanding blogosphere such as the posting of writings, the reading of blogs, and other forms of participation within the blogosphere, are therefore social actions which are continually being accomplished and being given meaning to by social actors. These actions cause it to be in a state of constant revision where "individuals create their own subjective meanings of their experiences through interactions with each other and their surrounding environment" (Hartas, 2010:44; Garfinkel, 1967, cited in Overgaard & Zahavi, 2009). Without bloggers, there is no blogosphere. Without social participants to impose their social and interpersonal influences by reading, commenting on, and posting replies to blog posts and to other readers' comments, there is no blogosphere and it is dead. Therefore, the social actors create the blogosphere, giving it life and meaning, shaping and revising it from its original state as link-driven sites to include other more innovative and interesting forms of blogging such as diary-like narratives of personal lives and encounters, business opportunities, specialty blogging of like-minded groups, and so on and it is still in a continuous state of change.

The social order of the blogosphere is an agreed upon patterns of actions as a result of negotiations between all parties who engage in the activities. It is frequently being adjusted through feedback from the social actors in the blogosphere. This supports Harding and Hintikka's (1983:x, cited in Hartas, 2010) argument that "knowledge should be grounded on human experience" and "bounded by people's social interactions, and the language used during these interactions" (Hartas, 2010:44). As the nature of knowledge is socially constructed and not independent of consciousness and experience, according to the epistemological stance adopted in this study, the way to attain this knowledge is to enter the blogosphere to engage the social actors and study their (writing) behaviour there. The existence of the blogging platform is only possible because of human minds. The platform on its own does not generate meaningful reality but the input of the actors interacting through blogging does. Both the subject and the object contribute to the construction of meaning (Crotty, 1998).

There are a few ways to engage the social actors. One is by doing a linguistic analysis of their writing for the choice of words used, their style of language, type and purpose of messages sent, the character of their writing, and replies they received in response to their messages. This is not limited to texts alone but other forms of media within the blog such as embedded pictures and videos. Another way to understand their behaviour in the blogosphere is to use a phenomenological approach by interviewing them directly and/or eliciting the desired information through surveys/questionnaires. Set questions in questionnaires which apply to the

general respondents can elicit answers within specific categories. However, as the nature of knowledge is socially constructed and different people construct meaning in different ways, interviews would allow for greater depth and variability and pre-set questions for interviews with the social actors can only act as a loose guide to help the interviewees understand what knowledge is being sought.

This epistemological stand is in contrast with the positivists' view that social phenomena can be measured and thus must be studied in the same scientific manner as the world of nature where knowledge can be derived from directly observed phenomena without the contribution of unobserved entities or internal states of mind (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006). According to the positivists' stand then, knowledge about bloggers' behaviour in the blogosphere would be sufficiently derived from directly observing the phenomena of blogging and there would be no necessity to engage the bloggers through interviews. The epistemological stance of objectivists too, would not require the input of social actors as they hold that meaning exists as an objective absolute, not consciously derived and therefore thoughts have no influence on what exists in reality (Rand, 1962), while subjectivists do not view that meaning is produced through an interaction between the subject and the object to which it is ascribed. Subjectivists posit that the world is unknowable and that it is pointless to develop a rigorous methodology to understand and measure reality simply because it does not exist (Ratner, 2008).

However, the kind of knowledge that is sought and hoped to attain by this research is *a posteriori* knowledge; how the social actors create meaning for themselves and for others in the blogosphere by using blogs to handle issues in their lives and how their blog writing reveals their identity to themselves and to others within the blogosphere. The outcome of the research can merely be suggestive, not conclusive, as no one blogger behaves in the same way despite sharing cultural and regional similarities or similar timelines. This knowledge can help us to understand the reality of blogging and how 'real' a world it is in which the bloggers have placed themselves, why it appeals to some and not others, and where it goes from here. It helps to reveal human behaviour and thirst for their voice to be heard, for the need to contribute or in social media term, to share. This will help us better understand the social psyche of human beings, and amongst other knowledge, their inner desires of wanting recognition yet wanting privacy. Employing the constructivists' approach of engaging the social actors is the best way to obtain this knowledge. Using the same procedures on different social actors will result in different outcomes because of the constantly changing nature of social reality and the diversity of the participants, hence some restrictions are put into place to reduce this situation, such as choosing social actors from a particular age group, academic background, and from a particular region.

In this research, a predominantly qualitative approach using a mixed method is used to elicit the data with the hope of being able to put together

a more comprehensive knowledge of the bloggers and the phenomenon of blogging in the Malaysian blogosphere.

4.2 Research Premise

A review of studies by various researchers, in particular studies with socio-cultural underpinnings has influenced the research basis adopted for this study. The research premises are that:

a. "knowledge should be grounded on human experience" and "bounded by people's social interactions, and the language used during these interactions" (Hartas, 2010:44).

b. language is a social phenomenon (Halliday, 1994), and therefore any examination of it should be carried out in the social context in which it occurs.

c. awareness of being observed can influence one's style and register of speech, i.e. the Observer's Paradox (Labov, 1972a), and therefore authentic data should be obtained from a natural setting with consent, and as far as possible, without any influence or intrusion from the researcher. Where authentic data on the website is freely accessible by anyone, consent to use it is not necessary.

4.3 Rationale for Choice of Data Collection Methods

To best understand the phenomenon of personal blogging among young Malaysian bloggers, it was necessary not only to visit their weblogs and analyse the contents therein but to also engage the bloggers themselves in the research. Qualitative and quantitative methods were therefore employed to collect the data through three instruments – an online survey which was used to obtain quantitative and qualitative data and to elicit prospective and willing interviewees; semi-structured interviews with selected survey respondents to obtain qualitative data; and an interviewee's blog interactive written communication. These instruments which are discussed in detail in the respective sections of this chapter have allowed me to obtain firsthand authentic data that would not have been achievable through other methods.

4.3.1 Online Survey

The decision to use an online survey was based on its effectiveness and efficiency in reaching the target group as it does not require the physical presence of an administrator, can be easily accessed by the online community anywhere at any time during the period the survey was available (one month), and respondents can answer the questions at their convenience. It is also environmental-friendly because it is paperless.

The online survey tool used for this research was *SurveyMonkey*, chosen mainly for its user-friendly functions, easy-to-read results, and low cost.

Because the research involves blogging, a medium of communication on the Internet, it made sense to use this method to reach the bloggers. A callout was placed in the Education Section of a Sunday issue of a local mainstream daily (*The Star*) which resulted in a total of 62 completed, useable responses.

Moving on from the online survey efforts, the following paragraphs describe the format of the questionnaire which incorporated both objective and subjective questions. The design of the questionnaire is entirely my own, taking into consideration the possibility of receiving responses from not only current bloggers but also those who had blogged and those who posted comments on blogs but were themselves not bloggers. Information provided by them would enrich the data and answer RQ1 and RQ2. The survey therefore was made up of four parts; i.e. Sections A (6), B (20), C (20), D (11), a total of 57 questions. Respondents were required to answer questions in only two sections depending on their blogging status. Section A was compulsory for all respondents, Section B was for active bloggers, Section C was for previous bloggers, and Section D was for non-blogger *commentors*. The bulk of the questionnaire (98.3%) was objective in nature, requiring answers like Yes/No, Duration, Frequency, and Type of Information but space was also given to allow text answers. The other 1.7% translated to a maximum of two subjective answers from the respondents, with no limit on how much they wanted to write.

Stated at the start of the survey was the maximum time required to answer the survey, i.e. 10 minutes. Informed consent must be given before they could start answering the questions.

Section A elicited demographic data such as gender, age group, nationality, L1 or L2 status, and blogging status. Respondents who did not meet the age requirement or nationality in this section were not able to view subsequent sections but were directed to the exit page. Therefore, Categories One, Two, and Three respondents (see below) are Malaysians from 18 to 25 years of age.

Section B which was for current bloggers (Category One respondents) obtained information about their blogging activities to reveal their relationship with their blogs and the language choices when blogging.

Section C which targetted those who had stopped blogging (Category Two respondents) had essentially the same questions as those in Section B. Separating the two sections could reveal if there are differences between the results for both groups. However, as the results later showed they were relatively similar, the results were merged to show one single group of bloggers.

Section D which was for non-blogger respondents who participated in other blogging activities such as posting comments (Category Three respondents) elicited information on language considerations made when posting comments and their views on blogging.

At the end of each of the sections, they were invited to participate in the interviews. Those who were willing, left their contact information and allowed their blog contents to be examined by providing their blog Uniform Resource Locator (URL). Ethical conduct was consistently observed although in reality, avid bloggers who publish their real photographs and real life stories for the whole blogosphere to read should essentially not have any issues with revealing their identities.

4.3.2 Interviews

The purpose of conducting the interviews was to have first-hand information on L2 learners' language-learning and language-use experiences that could help shed light on how they were using English in their blogs. Supporting Kvale's (1996) view that interviews allow people to convey to others, a situation from their own perspective and in their own words, the interviews were a tool to discover the bloggers' views on and attitudes towards using English in their blogs. Therefore, the selection of participants for the interviews was made from the pool of Category One respondents (currently blogging) though the option to be interviewed was made available to all respondents. Informed consent and accessibility to the participants and/or their weblog URL provided the basis for the selection of interviewees.

The design of the interview schedule is my own, taking into consideration the information I wanted to glean from these L2 bloggers. However, the interviewing process followed closely the seven method stages introduced by Kvale (1996) for qualitative research interviewing: thematizing,

designing the study to address the research questions, the physical interview, transcribing, analysing, verification, and reporting. Each interview with different interviewees differs in small degrees as the interviews were basically unstructured using a semi-directed form of questioning which was dependent on their blog contents and on the social actors' input about their individual experiences. The basic structure and purpose remained the main artery of the interviews but the narratives were led by the participants who decided what information they chose to provide and what they were not willing to share. Therefore, no two interviews were alike as their knowledge of the social phenomena of blogging was dependent on their individual experiences and choices in the blogosphere. For example, a blogger who was interviewed talked about not revealing her true identity in the blogosphere as 'it was not safe' yet she used her family name as part of the name for her blog. Knowledge of this was then used as a subsequent question to dig deeper into the issue of simultaneously wanting to conceal and reveal her identity.

The phenomenological approach to this research is based on the belief that the social actors' experiences as language learners, language users, and as bloggers need to be examined in order to provide insights of the realities of life, or to assist understanding of the essential 'truths' or phenomena of the lived experience (Heidegger, 1962; Byrne, 2001). The purpose was to try and understand the workings and rationale behind their blog writing from their perspectives, not from the researcher's own pre-conceived ideas of the phenomena of blogging and its related issues. The

resulting data from the recorded interviews helped to form a clearer understanding of the phenomena of blogging in Malaysia, of how they create meaning for themselves and for others in their weblogs.

4.3.2.1 Interview Participants

Studies have shown that bloggers often reveal their real names and other personal information (Huffaker and Calvert, 2005). However, identities proffered on the Internet are not always the true identity of the person at the computer (Qian and Scott, 2007). Therefore, the weblogs of 30 survey respondents who gave their weblog URLs and expressed interest to be interviewed were carefully examined. L2 respondents' weblogs were examined more thoroughly as selection for interview was mainly from this group of respondents. The weblogs were examined to establish their real identity, age, that they blogged mainly in English, and that their weblogs contained sufficient writing since textual communication was needed for examination in the final set of data. Their real identity and age were verifiable through their weblog profiles, the many self-photographs posted, and age-related events they participated in.

The criteria used to choose the interview participants were as follows:

1. They must give their informed consent to be interviewed (see section 4.6).

2. They must be active bloggers who have provided access to their weblog URLs. The first choice was L2 bloggers, followed by L1 bloggers.

3. Their accessibility to the researcher.

Although a total of 14 Category One L2 respondents gave their weblog URLs and were willing to be interviewed, three were not accessible as they were studying overseas.

The ten respondents who were contacted through e-mail for interviews yielded only six interview candidates, as four had changed their minds. One of the final six was, in fact, an L1 speaker who was one of the earliest respondents to the online survey. He was contacted for the interview at a time when the survey yielded only very few respondents who were willing to be interviewed. The interview with this L1 respondent was done with the expectation that it would produce information that would enhance or complement the information provided by L2 interviewees (see Chapter 6). Selecting and contacting the interview candidates was done throughout a period of two months.

Information about the objectives of the interview was e-mailed to the selected participants prior to the interview and arrangements were made to meet. Written confirmation/consent to participate was obtained through e-mail or during the interview itself.

The posted entries of those who were interviewed were examined to complement the survey findings on the themes of the content of posting.

Each entry was examined to verify the accuracy of the theme which was self-declared by the blogger. Where a theme was inaccurately labelled by the blogger, it was re-labelled to match the actual content of the entry.

4.3.2.2 The Interview Schedule

The interview schedule was tailored to suit each individual interview participant by reading their blogs before meeting them. Their answers in the survey were also used to probe deeper into their blogging experience. Open questions that give room to speak were used besides the standard ones as they allowed for interesting clues to opinions or facts about their blog writing (Mishler, 1986, in Czarniawska, 2004; Kvale, 1996; Wodak, et al., 1999). The participants were allowed to talk as much as they wanted as each experience narrated provided a more complete picture of themselves as bloggers and speakers of English, and was valuable for the reconstruction of their experiences later on. This method yielded rich data that informed the researcher about the influence from their background on their blogging habits and how they were using blogs to handle issues in their lives. A trial run was carried out on a Category Two L1 respondent (see Pilot Test II).

As is evident from the design, the interview schedule takes into account that the bloggers construct knowledge of the social phenomena of blogging, and contribute to it through their individual choices. In order to obtain that knowledge, the schedule had to be flexible to elicit the narratives of their individual and personal experiences of their navigation

in the blogosphere, and of how they make sense of and contribute to the blogosphere.

4.3.2.3 Interviewing and Recording

The interviews were lengthy, requiring reflection and recalling (minimum: 48 minutes; maximum: 151 minutes). Just as Czarniawska (2004) advised, researchers who carry out interviews for narrative production should offer their respectful and interested attention to gain an interviewee's confidence and trust in revealing information about his life; things he would not normally reveal to people simply because nobody asked. Hence, the interviews took longer than the expected one hour, and especially because of the nature of life-story narratives. Most of the interviewees were very responsive and cooperative and were more than willing to share their stories. They were clearly delighted that people were interested in their stories. Knowing that the interviewer had read their weblogs helped the rapport between them.

A short pre-interview chat gave the participant a chance to ask questions regarding the interview. The participant was informed that the conversation would be audio recorded and transcribed, and that he would have the opportunity to review the transcript later and clarify information he had provided. Participation was voluntary and the consent form was signed at this stage.

After each interview, the recording was downloaded into a computer and orthographically transcribed. Parts which needed further clarification and

replies were communicated through e-mails as part of the verification process during transcriptions to avoid misrepresenting the interviewees.

4.3.2.4 E-mail Interviews

Although e-mail interviews were not initially planned, it was carried out to accommodate an interviewee who was reluctant to meet face-to-face, citing time constraints (see Chapter 6.3). Not wanting to 'waste' a good candidate for interview (especially with the small number of potential interviewees), a series of back-and-forth e-mails took place which finally culminated in a brief face-to-face meeting during the data verification stage.

The drawback of using this method was the tedium and time taken to conclude the whole interview. Instead of a one-hour long interview, it was a series of e-mails going to and fro over a period of 42 days where time was needed for the interviewee to read the e-mails and compose her replies, for me to read her replies before constructing the next set of questions based on her replies, and so forth. Using this approach, I managed to elicit answers from the participant who faithfully stuck to the interview until the end. After the e-mail sessions were over, her replies were reconstructed into a narrative and the end-product was shown to her for her verification.

All the interview sessions were concluded over a three-month period. The pre-interview preparation took much longer because it was dependent on willing participants, their availability, and time to read their weblogs before the interviews commenced.

The next step was to select one interview participants' weblog for examination of its communication content.

4.3.3 Weblog Study

The weblog selected for in-depth study of its interactive communication was chosen from among those interviewed. The selection was based on the number of blog entries, the variety of entries posted, the number of comments received from [9]unique *commentors* for the interactivity element, and accessibility to the blog author for further correspondence and contact. Establishing good rapport with the blog author was necessary for a sustained relationship throughout the data analysis period and beyond. Therefore, the blogger whose blog was chosen for an in-depth study should be one whom I would be able to rely on for accessibility and openness. Although all the interviewees were willing to be contacted for further input and were happy to assist, Ocean was chosen because he met all the criteria.

Ocean's weblog consisted of 69 entries from the time he started his blog in April 2008 to the time his blog was examined at the beginning of December 2009. All 69 entries were read through in totality. Entries which were selected for in-depth study of their communication came from the first two months of his blog writing, the middle two months, and the final two months (at the time of the selection). The initial part of his blog entries were posted in April and May 2008 (11 entries), the mid-part were posted

[9] Comments made by different persons.

in December 2008 and January 2009 (9 entries), and the final part were posted in August and September 2009 (8 entries). Each part was separated from the next by seven months in order to pick out any significant changes in his blog writing and communicative exchanges. In total, 28 blog entries and comments to the entries were selected for the in-depth study.

In Section 4.3, I have explained the data collection methods for the current research. The next section explains the method of analysing the data.

4.4 Methodology for Data Analysis

Data for this research came from three different sources: online survey, interview, and weblogs. To analyse these three forms of data, both quantitative and qualitative analysis were employed to produce a more complete and richer picture of the blogger-respondents' experiences. Quantitative analysis was applied to the online survey results while qualitative analysis was used for both the interview results and the blog data.

4.4.1 Analysing Online Survey Results

SurveyMonkey, an online survey tool, was used for this research. The aggregate and individual response data were downloaded into PDF documents for further analysis. As there were no significant differences between the results produced for Categories One (current bloggers) and Two respondents (past bloggers), these were then merged and reanalysed to produce the overall results.

4.4.2 Analysing Interview Recordings

4.4.2.1 Transcription of Interview Recordings and Verification of Transcription

This section outlines the method of analysing the one e-mail and five audio-recorded interviews, lengths of which were between 48 to 151 minutes yielding a total of 520 minutes of recording (Ezdude: 48 mins; Jeff: 94 mins; Ocean: 113 mins; Camin: 114 mins; EC: 151 mins). The recordings were transcribed ad verbum and in their entirety. Even parts that seemed to have little relevant information were transcribed ad verbum. A simple transcription guide was used to facilitate transcription. For example, [...] indicates a pause, while [... ...] indicates a very long pause. Paralingual features were transcribed the way they sounded, for example *aah*..., *err*... and expressions that were clearly identifiable were added in square parentheses, such as [laughing], [sighing] and [giggling]. Words or phrases which were clearly emphasized by the speaker(s) were highlighted in **bold**. How the stories were narrated was also noted. An elaborate transcription system for this research was not necessary because the emphasis was on the content, i.e. the stories of their lives as L1 or L2 learners and users and as bloggers.

After the transcriptions, the recordings were re-examined. Where recordings showed inconsistencies or ambiguities, clarification was sought through e-mails. This proved useful when certain information was not given because the interviewee had thought it was not important to be mentioned, or when terms used were not interpreted the way the interviewee had

meant them to be. For example, one interviewee used the word *Chinese* to refer to the Mandarin language when it is also a term of reference for other Chinese languages such as Hokkien, Cantonese, or Hakka. Post-interview clarification was important to avoid possible confusion during the data analysis process.

4.4.2.2 Reconstruction of the Interviewees' Narratives and Verification of the Reconstructed Narratives

The ready transcripts underwent further processing for the reconstruction of the interviewees' narratives. Based on the contents, each transcript was organised into sections, for example, language background, language-use, language and cultural identity, blogging experiences and so on. Sections in each interviewee's reconstructed narrative are not exactly the same because of individual differences in their narratives. Each previous section helps to build up the subsequent section in the reconstruction to give a complete picture of their language journey that continues into their blogging practices. The reconstructions are meant to provide an overall and detailed picture of the participants' lives as language learners and users that began from the time they started learning a language until the time they became bloggers, actively using English the way they understand it in their blogs.

In reconstructing the narratives, there was a need to maintain a balance between the researcher's voice and the participants' voice to ensure that the reconstructions reflected the participants' true experiences and their

perceptions. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) emphasized this by giving the analogy of

> *living on an edge, trying to maintain one's balance, as one struggles to express one's own voice in the midst of an inquiry designed to tell of the participants' storied experiences and to represent their voices, all the while attempting to create a research text that will speak to, and reflect upon, the audience's voices (p. 147).*

The reconstructed narratives (including the information obtained through the e-mail interview) were presented to the respective interviewees for validation of data. Not only did the interviewees confirm that the reconstructions were accurate portrayals of themselves, they were also astounded by what was done to their narratives. It was also a satisfying feeling for the researcher to be able to accurately portray them and their voices through the stories which they had so generously shared.

4.4.3 Blog Analysis

> *"the aim of linguistic research in the community must be to find out how people talk when they are not being systematically observed; yet we can only obtain this data by systematic observation." (Labov, 1972a:209)*

Most of the data collected were as authentic and natural as could be to see how the blogger and his *commentors* 'talk' in the blogosphere. As mentioned in 4.3.3, Ocean's blog entries for analysis were taken from the time he first started blogging, which was way before he was contacted for interview, while blog entries immediately after the interview had taken place were not chosen for analysis.

4.4.3.1 Categorization of Language Features and Translation of non-English Terms

A general reading of all 69 blog entries chosen from Ocean's weblog was done to get an idea of the 'character' of the blog writing and climate of the comments. This helped me to custom-build a coding chart using colours, shapes, and markings which were randomly chosen based on available highlighter colours which would still allow the words to be easily read (see Figure 4.1). As examination of the blog communication progressed and more non-BSE features of the writing were discovered, they were added to the coding chart.

CODING CHART (Colour, circle, box, underline)

Coding	Code	Description
Yellow		Non-std spelling (e.g. numbers, punc representing spelling), Standard abbrev (ppl), Standard acronym (P&C)
Yellow, underlined		Spelling mistakes (alsn)
Yellow, circle		Emoticons (T_T)
Green		Slang (cool, noob) and colloquial words (how come)
Green box		Colloquial phrases (Like this also cannot)
Green circle		Colloquial particles (la, ma), colloquial exclamation (walao, cikkkkkooo)
Circle		Words of actions or sounds (SIGH, Huh, haha)
Blue		Tacit information (piramid, "A" ppl), Non-standard abbreviation (mv = movie), Non-standard acronym
Blue box		Vocabulary mistakes / wrong choice of words (e.g. Never forget = Mustn't forget)
Blue, underlined		Code-mix, name distortion
Underlined		Language distortion (y ZW u call yourself ghost)
=> G underlined	**=> G**	ʌ = missing word, sv = subject-verb disagreement, ' = missing apostrophe, prep = wrong preposition, cap = non-capitalization, t = wrong tense

Figure 4.1: Coding chart for blog analysis

Using the chart, the 28 selected entries were then scanned thoroughly and were marked accordingly. The colours, shapes, and markings helped to show the parts where the non-BSE features occurred and how frequently they occurred over the 28 entries. A sample of the marked entries is shown below (see Figure 4.2). Although existing online communication features such as text smileys (e.g. XD) and abbreviations (e.g. LOL) were initially included in the analysis, they were later excluded to focus the analysis on ME constructions and features (e.g. *hamsap*, *la*).

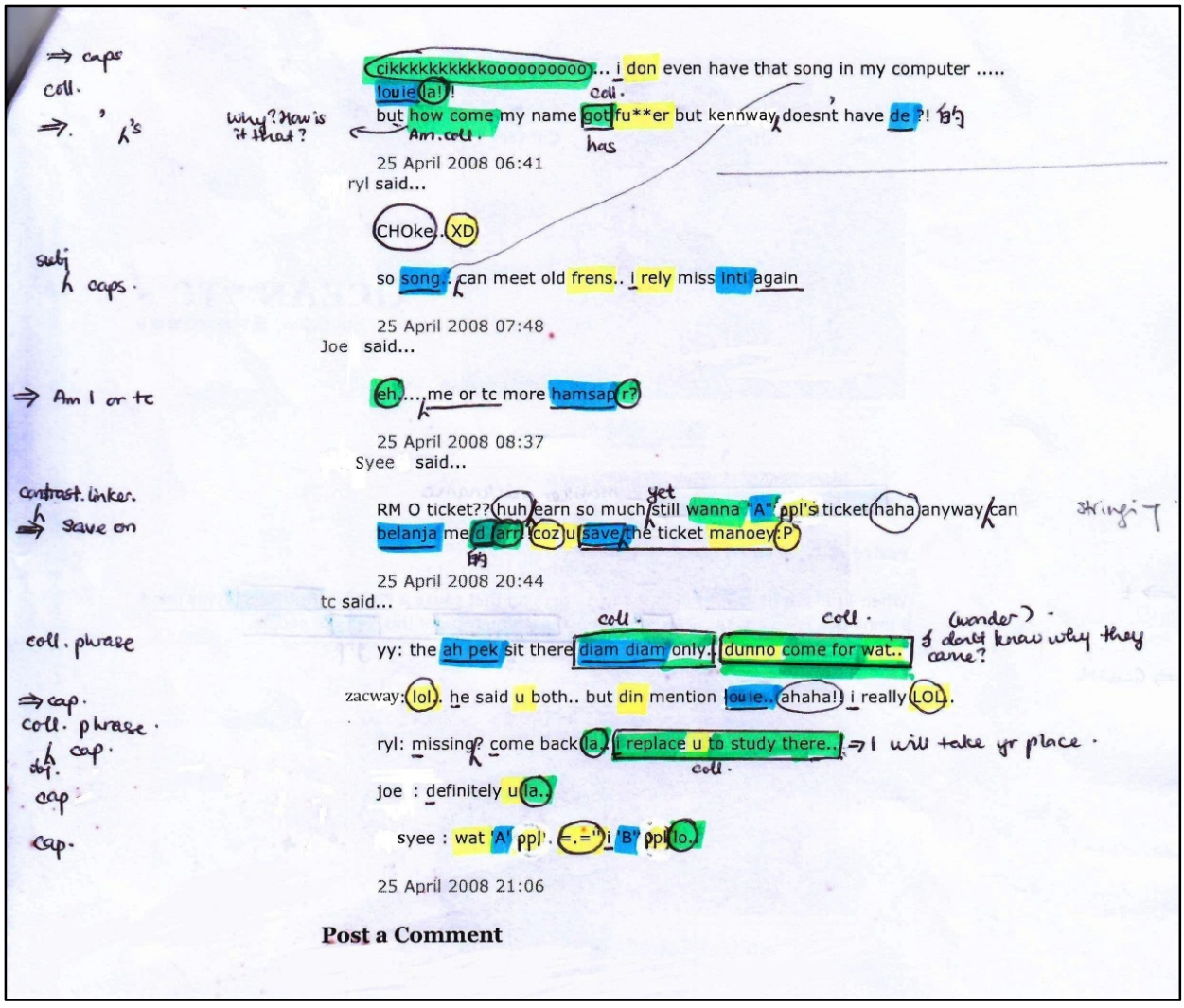


Figure 4.2: Blog analysis – coding the raw data

The codes were then entered into an Excel worksheet. Parts in which the codes appear were entered in their entirety to show how and when the features were used in context. Initially, all categorised features were recorded but were later reduced to include only those which matter to the research. The worksheet also has a column to provide the Standard English version to explain the ME constructions. Where words other than English were used, they were translated using online translation software and were complemented by my own knowledge of the Chinese language, and further verified by Ocean. One last step was to convert the Chinese characters to *pinyin*, the Romanized Chinese pronunciation to assist readers of this thesis to understand the verbalised Chinese characters. A sample of the worksheet is shown below (Figure 4.3). The examples in this sample were extracted from different worksheets showing the different features. The contents of the columns were in this order (from left to right): code and item number of the feature, type of listed feature and where the other features in the same quotation are listed, contributor of the quotation, origin of language and its meaning and how it would have been written in Standard English, and the blog entry where the quotation was taken from. Displaying the analysed data in this manner allows the meanings of the expressions, which were packed with cultural innuendos, to be explained in their entirety.

Though non-BSE in nature, the 'clever' way in which the ME expressions were used allow for the intended meanings to be expressed along with the

expressors' perceptions and attitudes on the matter, to those who understand ME.

Code	Type of features	Comment by	Quote	Meaning in source language & SE translation	Quoted from (post title & date)
A2	**Codemix**: Rom. (*also coll)	tc	wat the thing?? Don so hamsap can onot...??	Cantonese: lecherous or perverted. SE: What's the thing you're talking about? Can you not be so lecherous?	New Blog Under Construction, 20 Apr 2008
A35	**Codemix**: Rom	ChenHoy	congrats..u have resigned...play kao kao after tat...	Hokkien: thickly, in full strength. SE: to your heart's content	Letter of Resignation, 4 May 2008)
A60	**Codemix**: Rom **de** (*also particle)	ufriin	yr ans damn funny.. u tag me i sure ll do de.. wait **la**.. haha	SE: Your answer is damn funny. If you tag me, I'll surely do it. You just wait and see.	Tagged (forcefully), 28 Dec 2008
A69	**Codemix**: Rom	ufriin	lol.... guan wo shen me shi???	Source language: Mandarin SE: What's that got to do with me?	yl said, 23 Jan 2009
E31	Coll – **want**	Joe	When kway and ah woon come down, v meet there wan?	SE: Shall we meet there when Kway and Ah Woon come?	星光海外决定赛 17 May 2008
N27	**Q form**: particle **meh** (*also got)	tc	yy: haha.. yaya.. black dog blood.. i juz recall it.. rice **got meh**?? lol..	SE: (Laughs) Ya, ya. Black dog's blood {believed to ward off ghosts}, I've just recalled. But are you sure rice does that too?	Sibeh Bo Song, 25 Jan 2009

Figure 4.3: Categorization of language features in the blog

A feature is categorised as 'code-mixing' (Codemix) if words from a different language is mixed into the conversation which is conducted in English. The code-mixing is described in further detail as 'Romanized' (Rom), 'in its original form from the source language' (As-Is fr SL), or 'direct translation from the source language' (DT fr SL) to explain how the blogger is code-mixing his comment. A feature is categorised as a 'question form' (Q form) if it is a question formed by using CME question

forms (see N27 in Figure 4.3). Words or phrases used in place of actual terms in BSE are categorised as 'choice of word' (COW) feature, for example, "I've messed up myself" (Fate?, 29 May 2008) to mean 'I've messed up my life'. A feature is labelled as colloquial (Coll) if it is a colloquial form of ME, for example, "Wa … ur friend so good lor ar?" (Awana, 13 May 2008), and ME particles such as 'la', 'meh', or 'lorr' are labelled as 'particles' (particles).

4.4.3.2 Quantitative Analysis of Non-English Features in Blog Communication

The research also set out to show the frequency in which the specific non-English particles appear in the three sets of the blog entries. To do this quantitative analysis, the Simple Concordance Program 4.09 (SCP) was used. The SCP was chosen over other methods such as Text Stat, antconc 3.2.1, and CLAWS tagger because it was simple to use without compromising the findings. Besides, it was free software.

4.4.3.3 Verification of the Analysis and the Interpretation

Once the worksheet containing all the selected features had been listed and interpreted, a second meeting with Ocean was set up for him to verify the processed data, especially where non-English terms and abbreviations had been interpreted. It was a satisfying experience for the researcher to watch Ocean smiling and chuckling to himself many times whilst examining the worksheet of analysed data, shaking his head in wonder at what he had written which brought back fond memories. Indeed, he was pleased to have had the chance to look at what had been done to his blog

entries and the blog communication he had with his *commentors*, and also gained some understanding about the variety of English he and his *commentors* had used in his blog. The meeting was mutually beneficial to both the researcher and the respondent.

The categorisation of the type of features, the translation of the contents into SE, and their explanations were also verified by an expert in the area of ESL, Discourse Analysis, and Media Discourse. Her examination of a total of 525 items yielded a 98.86% agreement of how the data was categorised, translated, and explained. The other 1.14% was then rectified, especially where they are used in the thesis.

The next section describes in brief, the two pilot tests which were carried out before the actual full scale data collection commenced. The pilot tests were different from each other, each exploring a different angle of the research to gauge the feasibility of the research. All names of online profiles and of participants are anonymised or are used with permission.

4.5 Pilot Tests

Two slightly different but related tests - Pilot Test I and II - were conducted.

4.5.1 Pilot Test I

Pilot Test I was carried out to gauge the feasibility of using online class assignments as data. It involved L2 Malaysian undergraduates who were enrolled in a language course in a Malaysian university. Data were derived from the participants' communication in a private blog space on *Friendster*

and a questionnaire. The online communication consisted of peer comments on participants' posted journal writing. The questionnaire was administered to elicit feedback on this method of enhancing their learning experience. The participants' privacy was protected by creating a private group in *Friendster*.

It was found that all but one participant was happy to disclose a considerable amount of personal data on their *Friendster* blog, such as real first name, contact information, and personal photographs. The one participant who did not reveal her personal data went to great lengths to conceal all her personal identifying information, using *Anonymous Coward* as her pseudonym.

The findings also revealed that participants who did not involve themselves in the online tasks were embarrassed about their poor command of English and had privacy concerns regarding the computer-mediated tasks. Some of the participants were also uncomfortable about giving feedback on their peers' writing as they felt the need to be truthful, yet did not want to hurt their peers' feelings with their truthful comments. This scenario is different from the open blogging scene where most readers speak their minds about the blogger's public entries. Participants who were already bloggers at the time of the pilot testing had a more open attitude towards the peer review of their blog writing and less privacy issues.

In conclusion to this test, engaging non-bloggers as willing volunteers to start publishing their writing in blogs and allowing it to be scrutinized was

not feasible for my research. It was therefore decided that the research should involve existing bloggers from the blogosphere who had no issues with a public readership of their blogs.

4.5.2 Pilot Test II

There are two parts to Pilot Test II. Part One was a trial interview with a Category Two L1 survey respondent, known as Cucumber. A Category Two respondent is a previous blogger who had stopped blogging (see Section 4.3.1). Cucumber was chosen for the trial interview because he was not part of the pool of potential interviewees and also one of the very first respondents to be accessible at a point when time was of the essence. Ideas for the interview were borrowed from Hiles, Cermák, and Chrz (2009) who, in their methodological approach to narrative interviews, engaged participants in mapping key events in their lives which mattered to them in order to highlight how the participants interpreted those events. Cucumber was asked to chronologically mark events that he thought were important in his life as a learner and user of English along a vertical timeline on a sheet of paper.

The result of this attempt revealed that the events highlighted along the timeline were the same as those found in Cucumber's narrative in the interview. This task was therefore not included in the actual interviews to eliminate duplication of data and to reduce interview time. The interview with Cucumber which took 51 minutes gave an indication of how long the actual interviews would take. It also helped identify questionable terms used which were then modified to produce more precise meanings. As

example, 'Chinese language' is an umbrella term to refer to all Chinese languages (Mandarin, Cantonese, Hokkien, Hakka, etc.) but to Cucumber, it only meant Mandarin because that is the official language taught and learnt at Chinese schools in Malaysia. In summary, Part One of Pilot Test II tested out the interview schedule to ensure smoother and more efficient interview sessions with the actual interviewees and to reduce the need for re-engagement for merely clarification purposes.

Part Two of Pilot Test II was an in-depth micro-study of a blog entry and the comments received for that entry in a random blog which was selected for both its similarity and differences to the actual interviewees' blogs. The similarity of the blogger, Sam, was in terms of age group, ethnicity, undergraduate status, background languages, and main language used in her blog writing while the difference is her blogger status. Sam's blog received comments from a larger group of *commentors* including those whom she did not know in her offline life, because of her close association with a well-known blogger. In other words, there were a lot more unknown or anonymous *commentors* on her blog and what she wrote was under the scrutiny of the blogging population in Malaysia who followed her blog. The language content in her blog was therefore much more colourful than the ones in the current study. Her blog was personal in nature; the writings of a young adult trying to make sense of her life and of the world around her.

Part II was conducted to study the feasibility of analysing communicative intent in blog entries using a mix of Qualitative Content Analysis (Mayring, 2000) which is underlaid by Lasswell's (1948) model of mass

communication of "who says what to whom and with what effect" (see Figure 4.4), and the Glaserian approach of Grounded Theory methods (Glaser, 1978) which locates the phenomena of human experiences within the world of social interaction.

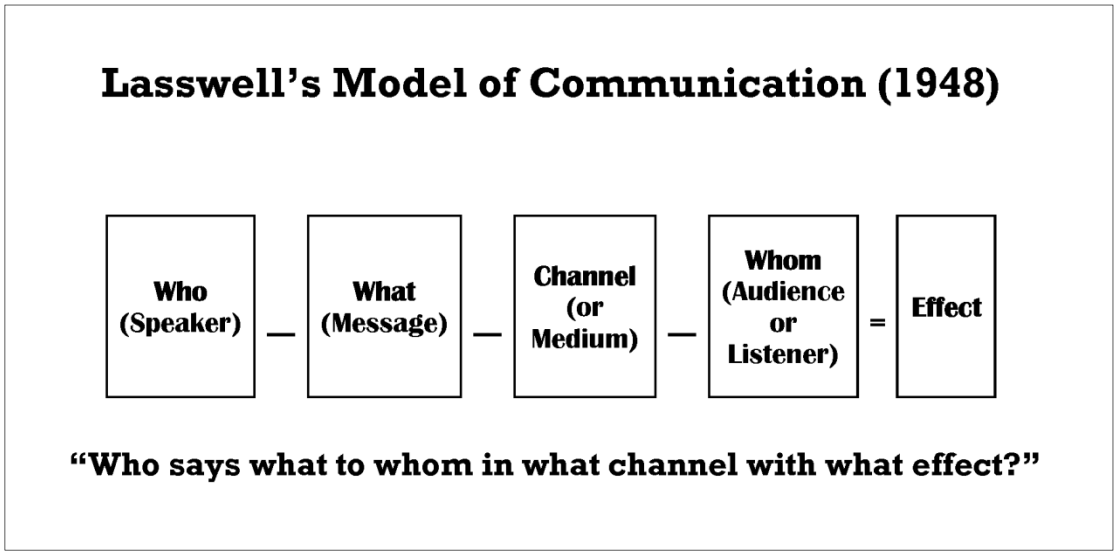


Figure 4.4: Lasswell's Model of Communication (1948)

The particular blog entry chosen was entitled "Definitely, Maybe", written in 47 paragraphs of a total of 2520 words. In it, she recounted an incident that happened between her and her then boyfriend on her maiden trip to Singapore. The entry received 64 comments; 13 were anonymous, another 13 were her replies, and the rest (n=38) were from thirty one named *commentors*. Her blog entry was examined to see how she structured her message for its communicative intent. The analysis revealed a difference between her stated aim in posting that entry and her real aim of using this platform to seek out her readers' perception and to sort out her relationship issue. Indeed, the interactive communication between her and

her readers and *commentors* supports the social constructivist view that knowledge is constructed (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). A member of the blogosphere can read about and be educated on the dos and don'ts of blogging, of blogging etiquette, and what blogging should be but nothing can quite prepare a blog reader, *commentor,* or writer for the reality of it. Sam received a lot of hostility from her *commentors* for posting this entry, some of whom were anonymous, but she also received support and positive comments about how she handled the situation in the story she posted. Analysis of the interactive communication that followed the posted entry showed her clever manouvering of the flow of exchanges by employing linguistic moves such as pausing, questioning, paraphrasing, and making careful language choices, whilst allowing fellow *commentors* their voices, to achieve her aim.

Indeed, the blogging platform as a medium of communication appears to be a powerful tool which can be utilised to manage offline conflicts by harnessing and manoeuvring the voice of the readers to shape the conversation to achieve the desired effect.

Though analysing the communicative intent to discover "who says what to whom and with what effect" (Lasswell, 1948) revealed the amazing way in which young bloggers are employing this method to manage their offline lives, however, the blog data in the current research revealed interesting features of language that demanded more than just studying the communicative intent. The communicative exchanges in Sam's blog also exhibited extremely strong language. Ocean's blog, on the other hand,

showed careful respect through almost total absence of strong language. In fact, attempts to use strong language were reprimanded in the blog. Sam was an L1 learner who obviously had much control over her ability to use English to her advantage, while Ocean was L2 and was using his blog as a way to improve his command of English with a small group of known *commentors*. Hence, Ocean's blog was analysed to see how he used English to convey his messages through his blog and whether his communicative intent was achieved through the manner in which he used the language. What are his language strategies? How were they employed and with what purpose? These were answered in the findings.

The next section seeks to declare that research ethical procedures were complied with.

4.6 Observing Ethical Protocol

> *"Whenever we conduct research on people, the well-being of research participants must be our top priority. The research question is always of secondary importance. This means that if a choice must be made between doing harm to a participant and doing harm to the research, it is the research that is sacrificed." (Mack, et. al., 2005:8)*

The School of Education, University of Nottingham, U.K. adopts the British Educational Research Association's (BERA) Revised Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research (2004) in all research efforts carried out by its students, especially those that involve fieldwork or data collection. As

such, all the data collection endeavours in this research were carried out in adherence to the guidelines.

Approval was received from the Research Ethics Committee of the School of Education, University of Nottingham, before data collection efforts started. Informed consent was obtained at every stage of data collection. Participation was voluntary and the participants' informed consent was obtained using the Participant Consent Form after they have read the Information Sheet for Participants.

4.7 Summary of Chapter Four

In this chapter, steps in executing this research have been described in detail. The philosophical positioning of this research which informs the rationale for the choice of data collection method has been discussed. The chosen methods allowed specific data to be collected in order to answer the RQs, and this is summarized in the table below.

RQs	Data collection methods
RQ1: What are the blogging practices of young Malaysian bloggers?	Online survey
RQ2: How are they using this medium of communication?	Online survey, Interviews
RQ3: How do they use English in their blogs?	Interviews, Blog analysis

Figure 4.5: Data collection methods to answer RQs

CHAPTER 5: DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS - SURVEY RESULTS

5.0 Introduction

RQ1: What are the blogging practices of young Malaysian bloggers?
RQ2: How are they using this medium of communication?

This chapter and the next two present the findings from the three sets of empirical data which were collected for this research: the online survey results, analysis of the six qualitative interviews conducted with selected survey respondents, and an in-depth analysis of the 28 selected blog entries from one of the interviewees' weblog. Figure 5.1 provides a summarized description of the participants of the current study. In-depth information about them is detailed in the respective chapters of findings (see Section 1.0 for details about the Malaysian population).

DESCRIPTION OF THE PARTICIPANTS OF THE STUDY				
All participants are Malaysian speakers of English between 18 to 25 years old				
	Details	**Survey**	**Interview**	**Blog analysis**
RACE	Malay	11		
	Chinese	44	6	1
	Indians	2		
	Dusun	1		
	Undetermined	4		
TOTAL		**62**	**6**	**1**
GENDER	Male	14	4	1
	Female	48	2	
TOTAL		**62**	**6**	**1**
LEARNER STATUS OF ENGLISH	L1	29	1	
	L2	33	5	1
TOTAL		**62**	**6**	**1**

Figure 5.1: Description of all the participants of the study

The findings from the online survey results were based on the 62 useable responses (see section 4.2.1). All 62 useable responses were from male and female Malaysians residing in Malaysia or Singapore and were current bloggers, former bloggers, or blog *commentors* in the 18-25 age group. These findings revealed their blogging patterns, the role of blogging in their lives and language considerations made when blogging. Most research on Malaysian bloggers focussed mainly on blogging behaviour and the role of blogging (Krishnamurthy, 2002; Vethamani, 2006; Windows Live Spaces, 2006) but did not study the language aspects of their blogging or commenting. The current research was designed to address this gap.

The Free Dictionary (2010) defines the word 'commenter' as 'one who makes or writes comments; a commentator, an annotator. In the respondents' blogs, this was frequently spelt *commentor* to refer to Internet users who post comments. Although *commentor* has yet to make its way into the mainstream dictionaries despite its wide usage on the Internet, its meaning and function is the same as *commentator,* a more formal version used in more formal settings such as broadcasting or event reporting in the news. In this research *commentor* is used to reflect the choice of the bloggers who belong to a new cyber-community which frequently coins and uses new terms instead of established ones. However, as it has not yet been included in mainstream dictionaries, this term and its derivatives are used in italics in this dissertation.

The qualitative interviews were conducted to discover the bloggers' language learning and language use experiences, their perception of and

attitude towards learning and using English. Their narratives showed the richness of their varied language learning backgrounds which influenced their language choices and attitudes.

Findings from the blog analysis revealed the unique language features which infused the English used by the bloggers, which in turn exposed the personal and cultural identities of the users. These findings are discussed in three parts in this and the following two chapters.

5.1 Survey Results

5.1.1 Blogging Status and Language Learning Status (L1 or L2)

The majority of the 62 respondents were L2 users (Figure 5.2), having learnt English at preschool (37.1%), primary level (14.5%), and secondary level (1.6%) of education. The other 46.8% were L1 users who had learnt English from birth and used English as a means of communication within the family and outside the home. In the rest of this chapter and elsewhere in this thesis, L1 users refers to respondents who had learnt English from birth while L2 users refers to respondents who had learnt English not from birth, i.e. at preschool, primary or secondary levels of education. In this graph and in subsequent ones in this chapter where numbers appear along the Axis-x, they refer to the number of respondents of the study.

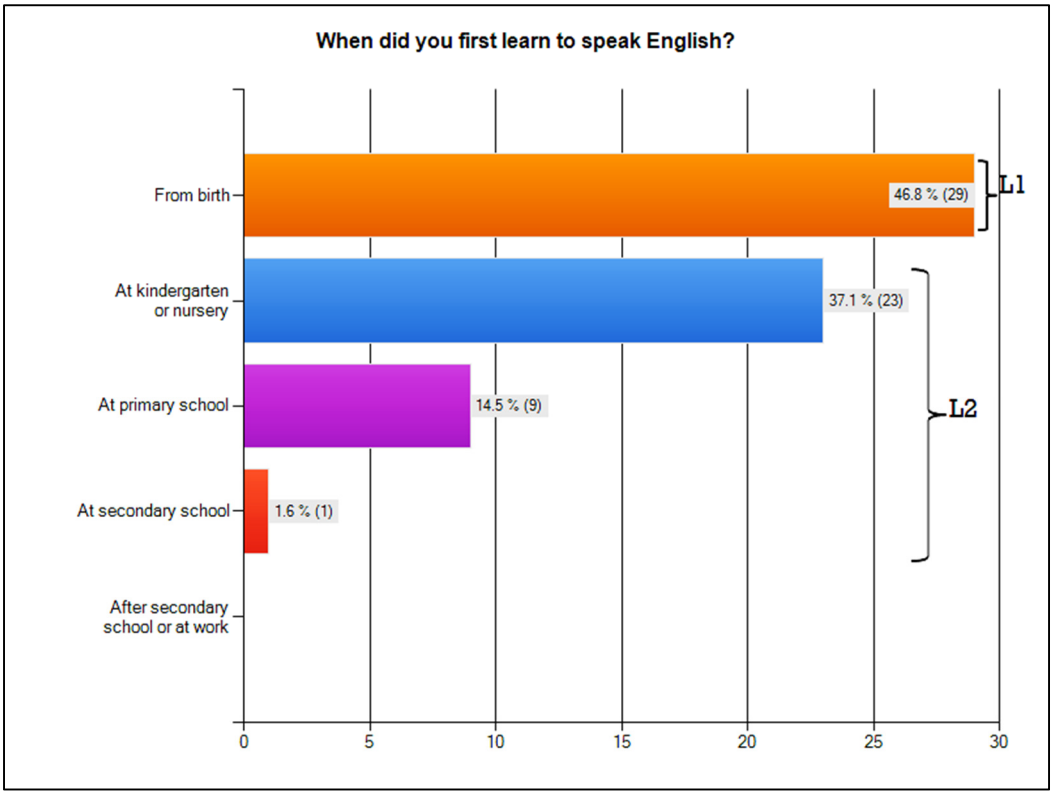


Figure 5.2: Respondents' language learning status

Although the L2 users did not learn English from birth, 66.7% indicated that they were confident using English alongside other languages that were in their repertoire. The percentage added up to a total of more than 80% of survey respondents who were confident in using English (Figure 5.3) regardless of their language proficiency. This high percentage among young Malaysians who were answering an online survey in English is not surprising given that English is the language most widely used on the Internet and in urban areas in Malaysia, and is a second language in Malaysia and in the Malaysian education system (as outlined in Chapter Two). Hence, every Malaysian in the target age group of this research would have had sufficient exposure to English in school which should enable them to comfortably understand and speak in English. The amount

of exposure, however, was dependent on whether they were educated in vernacular schools or national schools.

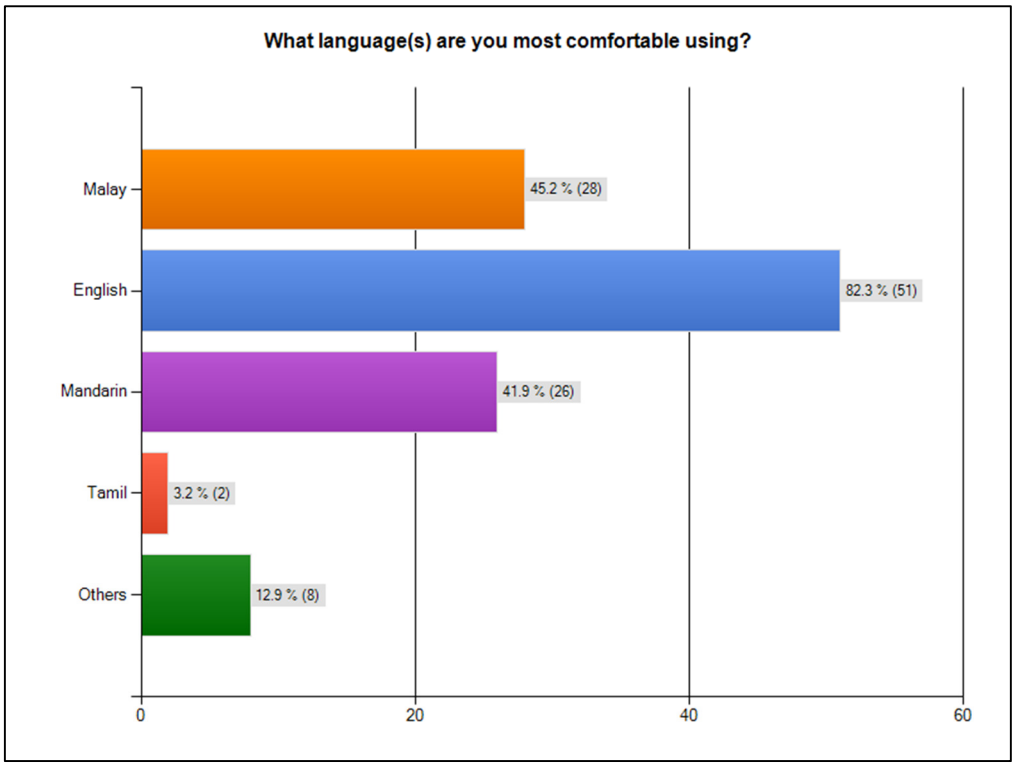


Figure 5.3: Languages which respondents were confident in using

The respondents were made up of 82.2% of bloggers, 9.7% of former bloggers, and 8.1% of those who did not blog but who were interested in reading blogs and posting comments to blogs. The current bloggers comprise less L1 users and more L2 users, demonstrating that L2 users in this research were as interested in blogging as L1 users, if not more so. Those who had stopped blogging also comprised both L1 and L2 users, indicating that their ease in using English appeared to have no bearing on their interest in blogging (Figure 5.4).

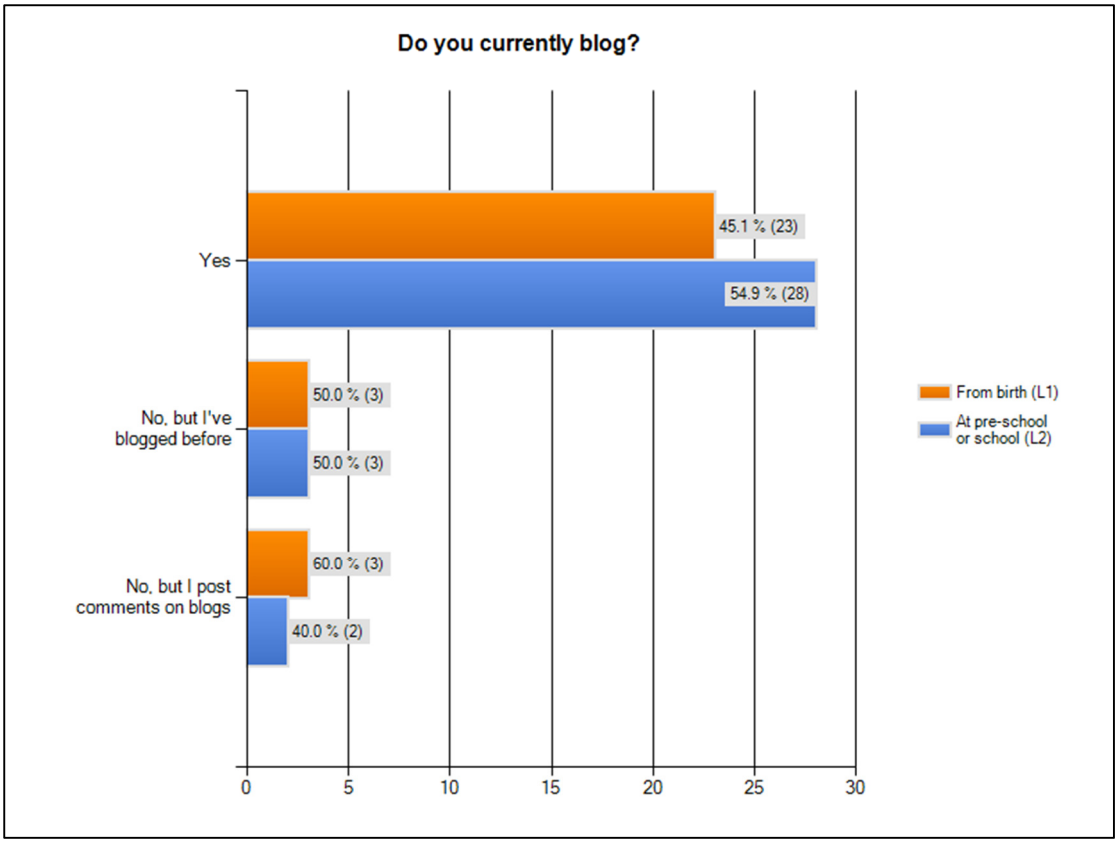


Figure 5.4: L1 and L2 respondents' blogging status

In the research, all survey respondents who blogged used English as their main language for blogging regardless of whether they were L1 or L2 users (see Figure 5.5). This is most probably the result of being aware of English as the main language of CMC, and so, in order for their blogs to have greater exposure in the blogosphere, the respondents needed to use a language that was internationally understood. However, there were occasions of code-mixing and code-switching in their blogs, using local languages in Malaysia such as Malay and Chinese. None of the bloggers used Tamil to blog, perhaps due to technical limitations or lack of proficiency. As can be seen from Figure 5.5, L1 respondents too used a mix of languages in their blogs although they mainly used English. Being Malaysians, they have the privilege of being in a multiracial environment

where they have a variety of languages in their repertoire, especially Malay and English languages which are generally understood by all Malaysians. Therefore, the languages they used in their blogs reflect their cultural and national identities. The range of language(s) they used is therefore richer and reflects their moods when blogging. Sometimes, the bloggers blog in the foreign languages they have learnt such as Japanese and Korean in order to practise using the languages. Their reasons for using certain languages when blogging, are revealed in their narratives in Chapter Six.

Which language(s) do you blog in?	When did you first learn to speak English?					
	L1	L2				
	From birth	At kindergarten or nursery	At primary school	At secondary school	After secondary school or at work	Response Totals
Malay	21.7%	30.0%	42.9%	0.0%	0.0%	27.5%
English	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	0.0%	**100.0%**
Chinese	13.0%	40.0%	14.3%	**100.0%**	0.0%	25.5%
Tamil	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Others	0.0%	5.0%	28.6%	0.0%	0.0%	5.9%

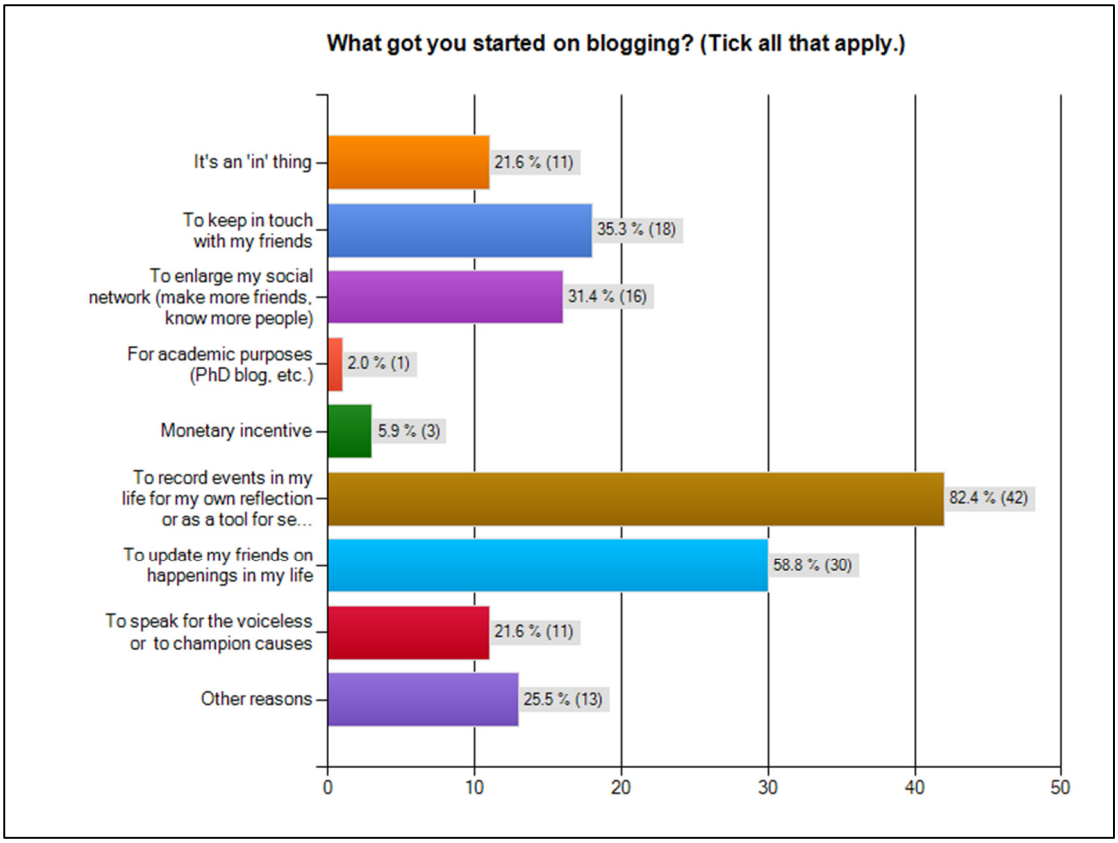
Figure 5.5: L1 and L2 current bloggers' blogging languages

5.1.2 Blogging Reasons and Patterns

One of the objectives of this research was to discover why young Malaysians between 18 and 25 years old blogged. Two main reasons which emerged from the survey data among those who were still blogging were:

to record events in their lives for their own reflection or as a tool for self-discovery (82.4%) and as a way to keep friends updated on happenings in their lives (58.8%). More than 35% of the bloggers also used blogging as a tool of communication to keep in touch with their friends through applications on their blogs such as the *cbox* (chatboxes) where they could chat asynchronously with their blog visitors. 31.4% also used this platform to enlarge their social network, using it as an efficient and effective way of getting to know more people. The figures reveal that more of them regard their blogs as an avenue for self-expression than for social interaction.

Interestingly, a small number (7.8%) were using their blogs to practise and improve their writing. Most students find writing, such as classroom writing, intimidating. Perhaps there is less pressure in writing blogs because there is no one grading the writing and the author does not have to ensure the writing is free of errors.



Other reasons:

1	Just to share my thoughts basically (x1)
2	To air my views and thoughts on issues in a diverse and detailed manner (x1)
3	Blog in information on current issues and facts for reference for me and my friends (x1)
4	I just really love to write (x1)
5	For fun (x1)
6	To practice my writing, express my ideas on certain things (x1)
7	Enjoy writing (x1)
8	To say out what am I thinking and my opinion towards something (x1)
9	Just for fun (x1)
10	Let people know me better (x1)
11	To get opinions of friends who reads my blog and see different points of view (x1)
12	I want to write (x1)
13	To keep a 'developer diary' of the projects I am carrying out (x1)

Figure 5.6: Reasons for starting a blog (current bloggers)

Among respondents who had stopped blogging (n=6), two main reasons for starting their blogs originally were to record events in their lives for their own reflection or as a tool for self-discovery and because it was the craze at that time (Figure 5.7). Most of them stopped blogging less than two years after starting their blogs.

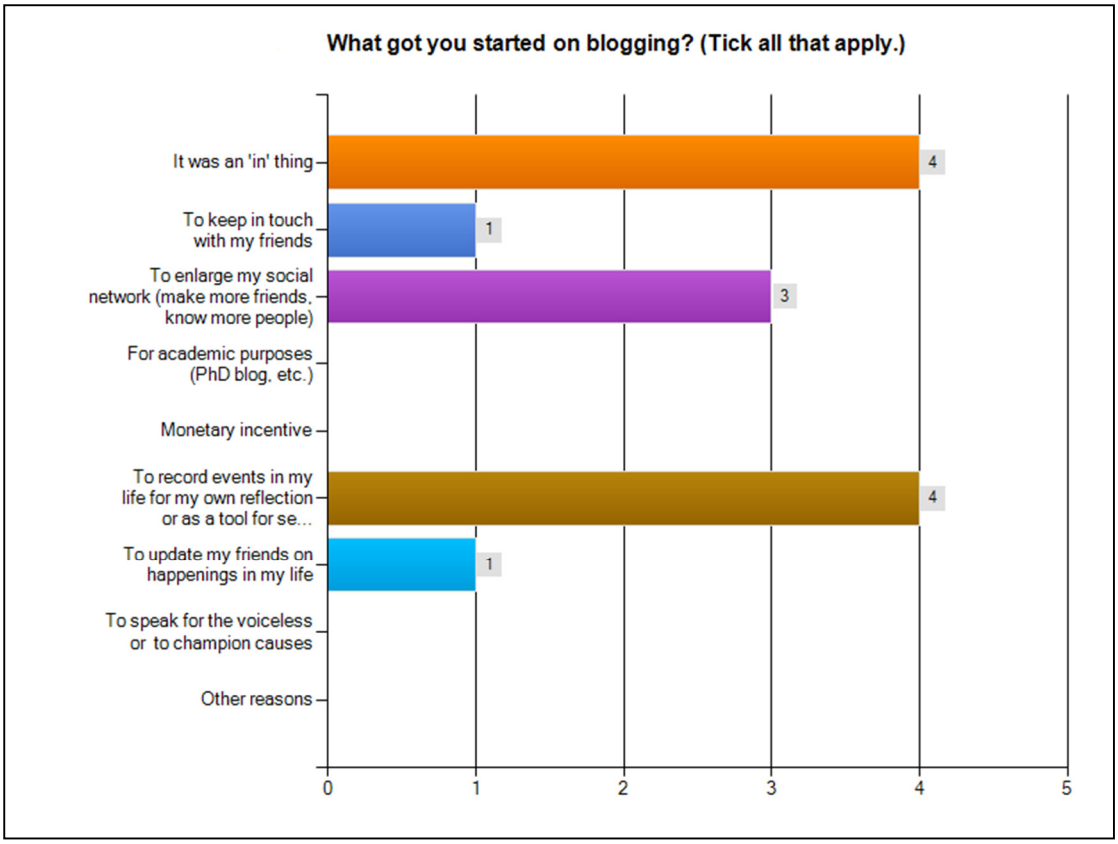


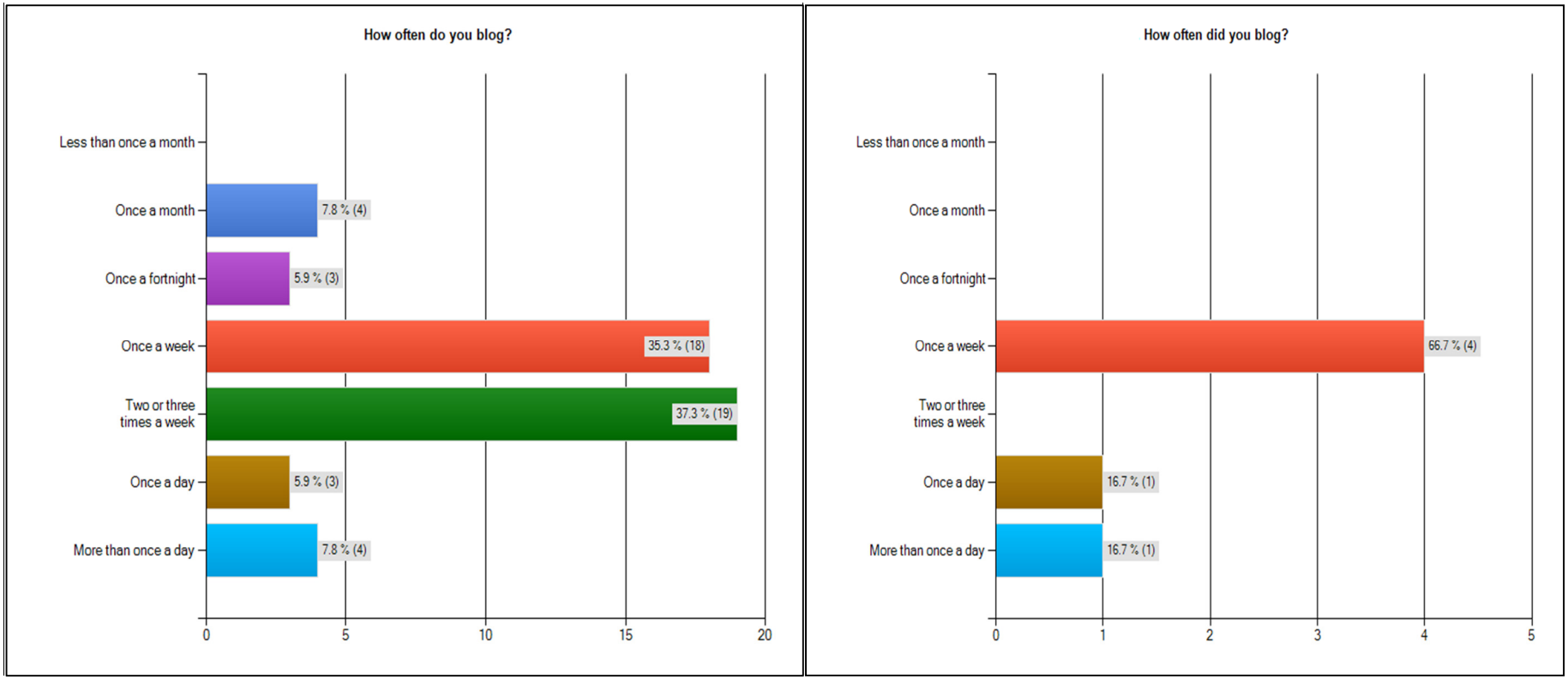
Figure 5.7: Reasons for starting a blog (former bloggers)

The research also sought to determine how much time young Malaysian bloggers were spending on their blogs. This does not include time spent on reading other blogs or commenting on them. Among respondents who were blogging, more than 70% of them tended to blog at least once and at the most three times a week, spending up to three hours on it each time (76%). The six former bloggers had tended to blog only once a week and also up to three hours each time (Figures 5.7 and 5.8). The average amount of time spent on blogging therefore did not seem excessive.

The statistics also show that respondents who were still blogging at the time of this study seemed to blog more frequently and with a longer duration than former bloggers. Respondents who did not blog as much

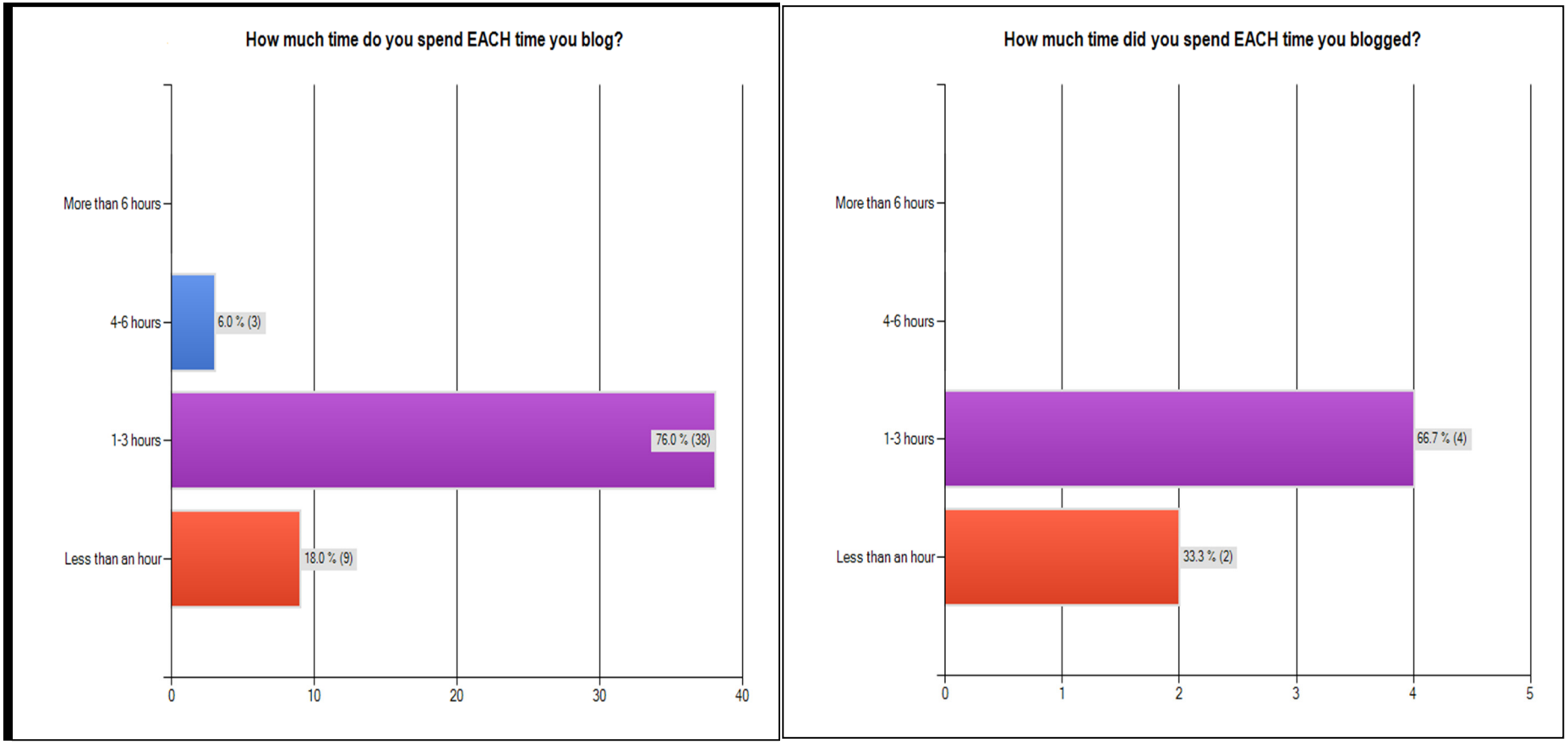
(once a month or once a fortnight), blogged only when they had something to blog about but did not leave blogging altogether. It indicates that their blogs did not play a major role in their lives but perhaps served as an occasional alternative pastime or an avenue for occasional sharing. These are probably bloggers who had other priorities and could not afford the time and effort needed to maintain a constantly active blog.

The former bloggers' blogging habits were somewhat similar to those of the active bloggers in the current study. They blogged either daily or once a week.



CURRENT BLOGGERS **FORMER BLOGGERS**

Figure 5.8: Frequency of blogging



CURRENT BLOGGERS **FORMER BLOGGERS**

Figure 5.9: Duration of each blogging activity

This research also sought to discover what these respondents blogged about with the aim of knowing what issues young people in Malaysia thought were important for them to blog about. More than 90% of the bloggers centred their blog entries on happenings in their lives and slightly less than that on their personal interests. This shows that the theme of their blogs was 'I, me, and myself' although national issues, their studies, and their friends were also favourite topics (Figure 5.10). Some respondents blogged mainly about topics they were passionate about, such as nature, religion, and art. For example, Ezdude's blog posts were mostly about Christian teachings and his life as a Christian rather than his life per se (see section on Ezdude's Story).

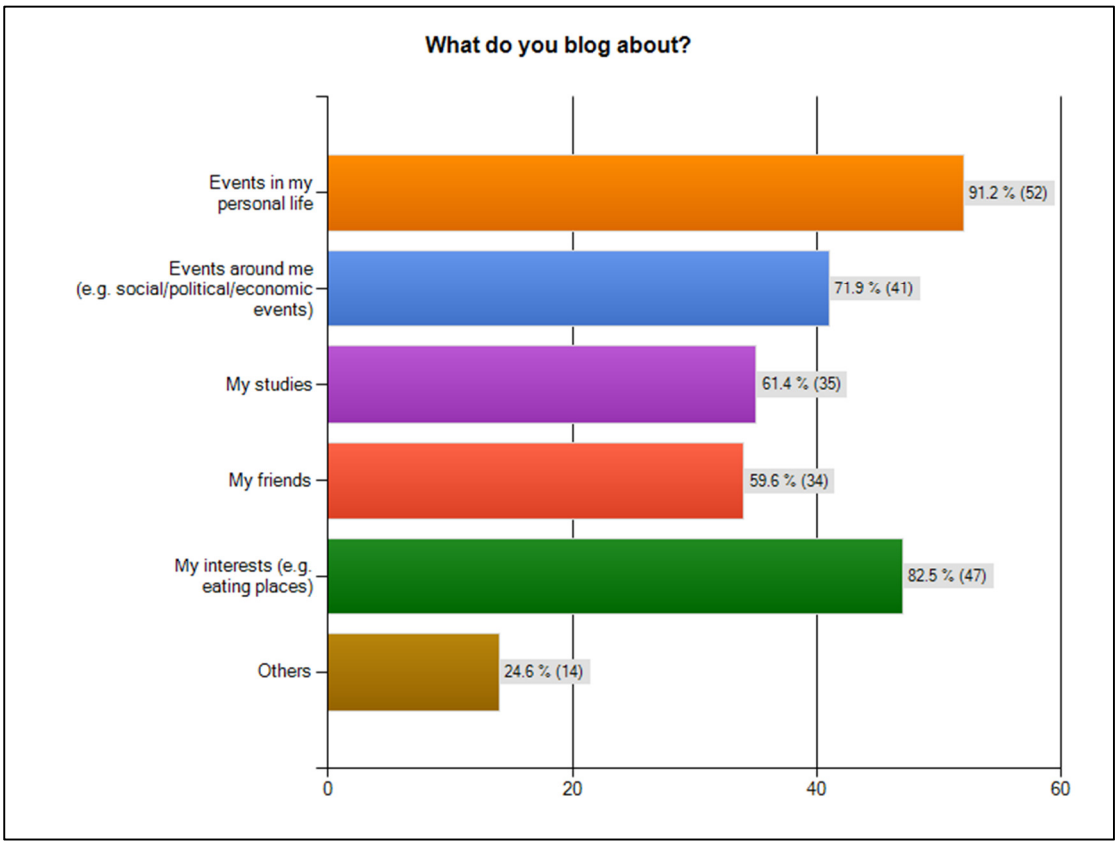


Figure 5.10: What they blog about

Findings from an examination of 789 entries posted by the 6 interviewees also reveal that 31% of their writings were specifically about themselves and less than 10% each were about other issues such as entertainment and awareness about things happening around them (Figure 5.11). This further reinforces the idea of their blogs as personal diaries to record their thoughts and perceptions for self-reflection, since the survey findings recorded 82.4% of participants claiming to use blogs for self-expression and 58.8% for social interaction.

Comparing this finding with Trammell, Tarkowski, Hofmokl, & Sapp's (2006) quantitative content analysis of 358 blogs which revealed self-expression (80.3%) as the primary motivation for blogging among Polish bloggers, while social interaction (51.3%) and entertainment (52.6%) also rated highly in their sample, as well as Papacharissi's (2002) study on home pages which revealed self-expression (82.4%) as the primary motivation for Internet-based publication, we can see similarities in the primary motivation(s) for Internet-based publication. Similar findings are also found in other research carried out on blogs such as Nardi, Schiano, et al.'s (2004) and Herring, Scheidt, et al.'s (2004). The young Malaysian bloggers in this study, too, use their blogs mainly for self-discovery and self-expression.

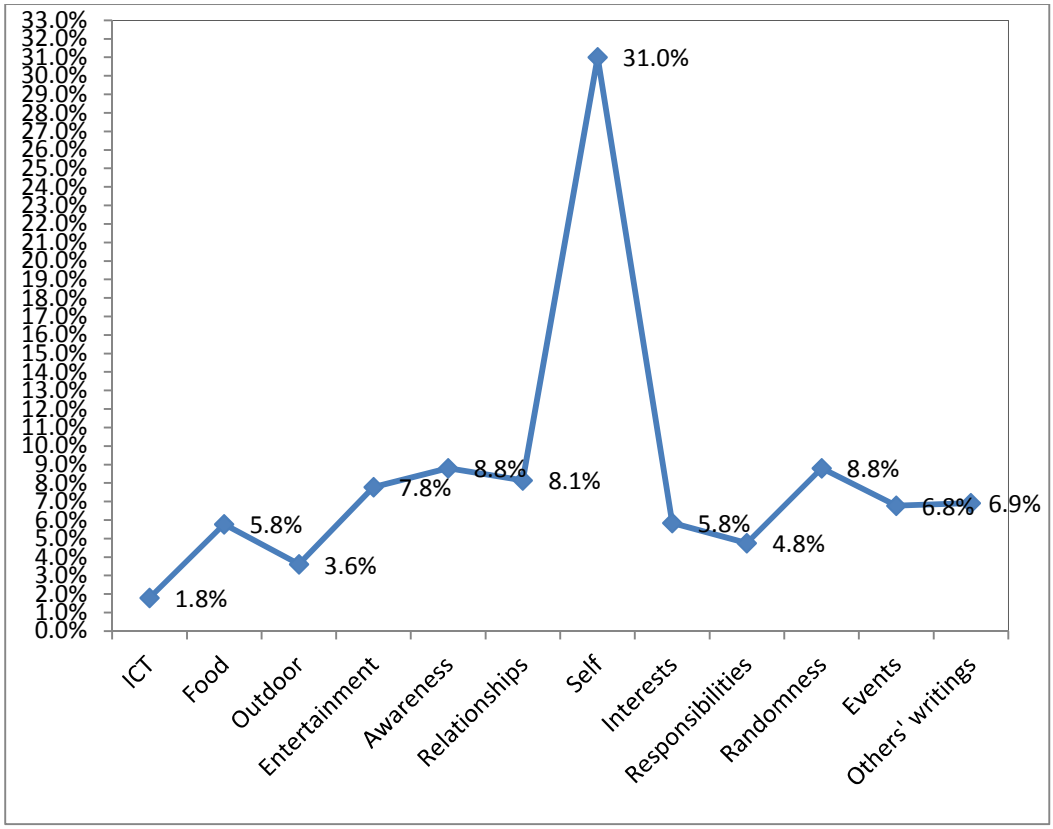
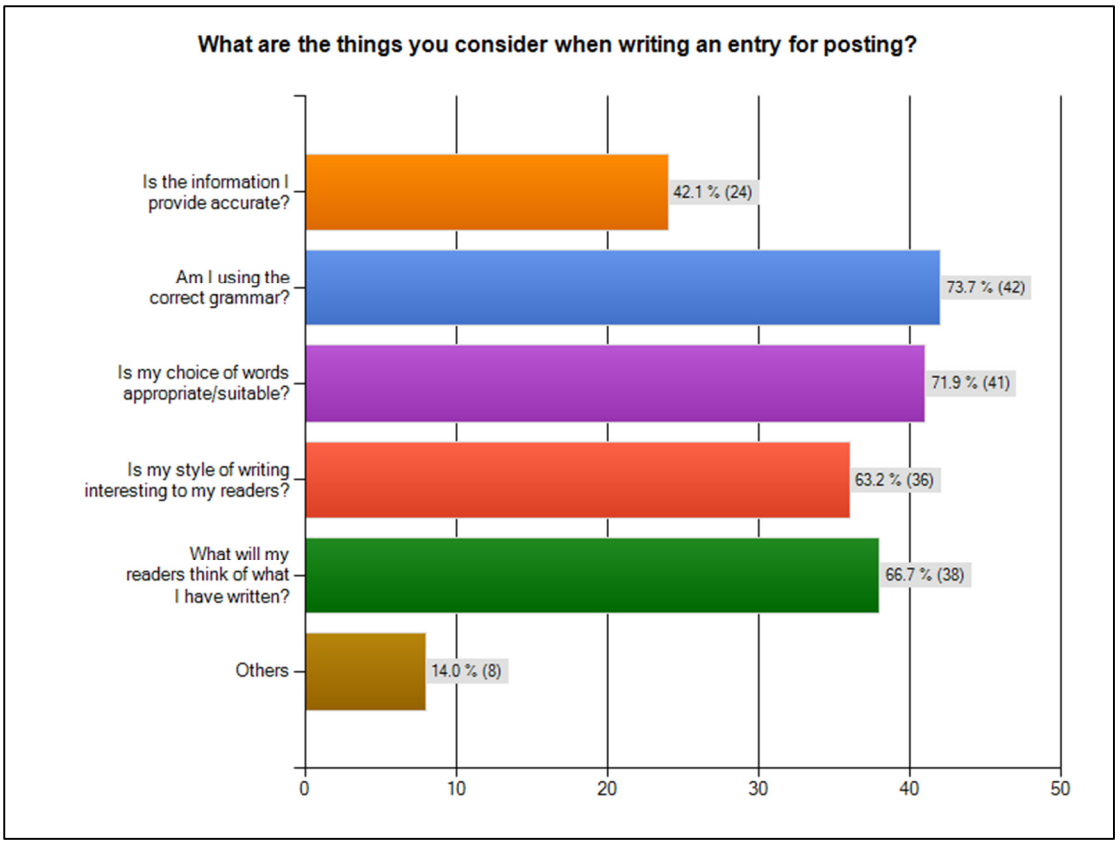


Figure 5.11: Topics of the interviewees' blog entries

5.1.3 Language Aspects of their Blogging and Commenting in Blogs

Although less than 10% of bloggers mentioned using blogs to practise writing (Figure 5.6 - other reasons), in reality over 70% were mindful of using appropriate words and good English, and over 60% were concerned about using an interesting style of writing that would appeal to their readers (Figure 5.12). A high percentage of them were also concerned about their readers' perception of their writing (66.7%) as opposed to only 41.2% who cared about providing accurate information in their blog writing. Considering that blogging does not have a language watchdog and is more informal writing than classroom writing which has an authority

grading their writing, it is surprising that bloggers willingly took on the task of autonomous editing while blogging.



	If 'Others', please specify:
1	Does the way in which I'm writing accurately reflect the mood or thought I want to capture?
2	Is my writing interesting
3	Am I telling too much?
4	Will my blog entry is offensive towards individuals.
5	To lessened the use of bad words
6	Do I need pictures to help clarify what I'm blogging?
7	Am I compromising my own principles? Is it really what I wish to say, or am I self-censoring myself in some way, and if so, why?
8	hat what i write is an authentic expression of who i am and how i feel/felt at the moment

Figure 5.12: Considerations made when writing a blog entry for posting

89.5% of the bloggers edited their entries before posting and the two common types of editing made were the suitability of words or expressions used and grammar (Figure 5.13). There was less concern about the length of writing as there was no word limit imposed on entries or comments.

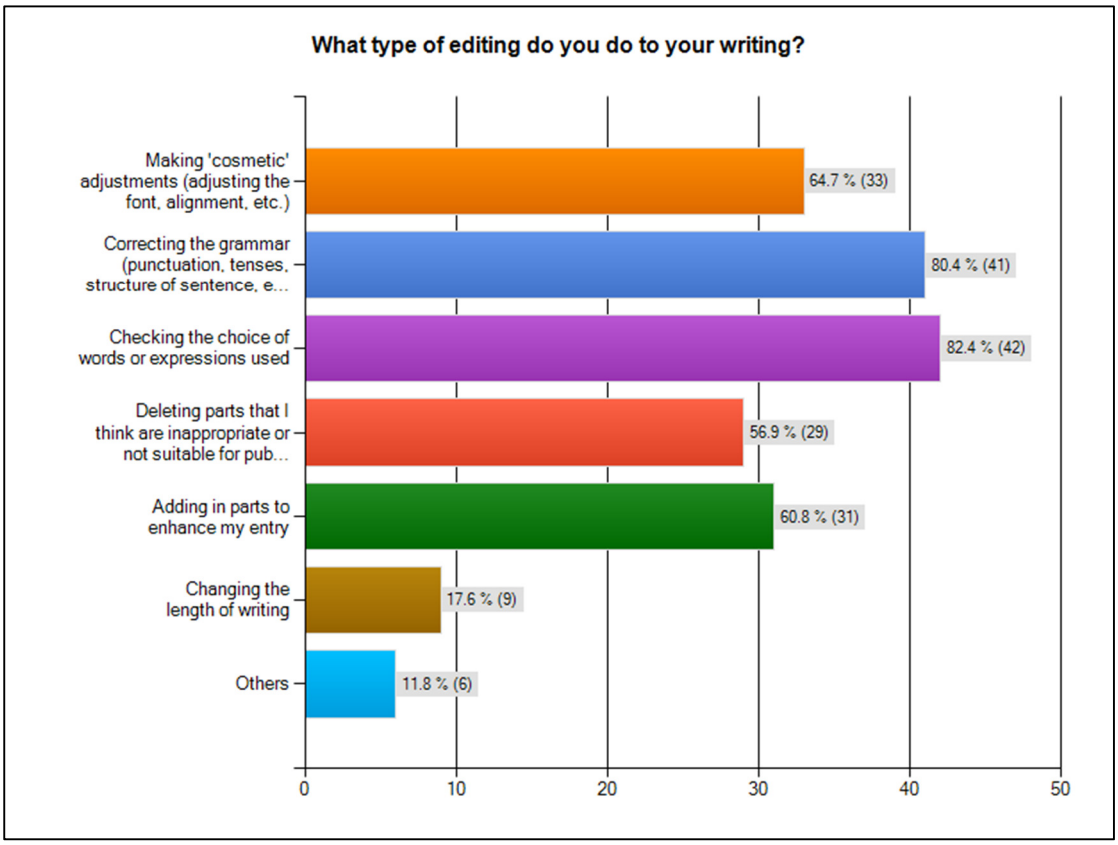
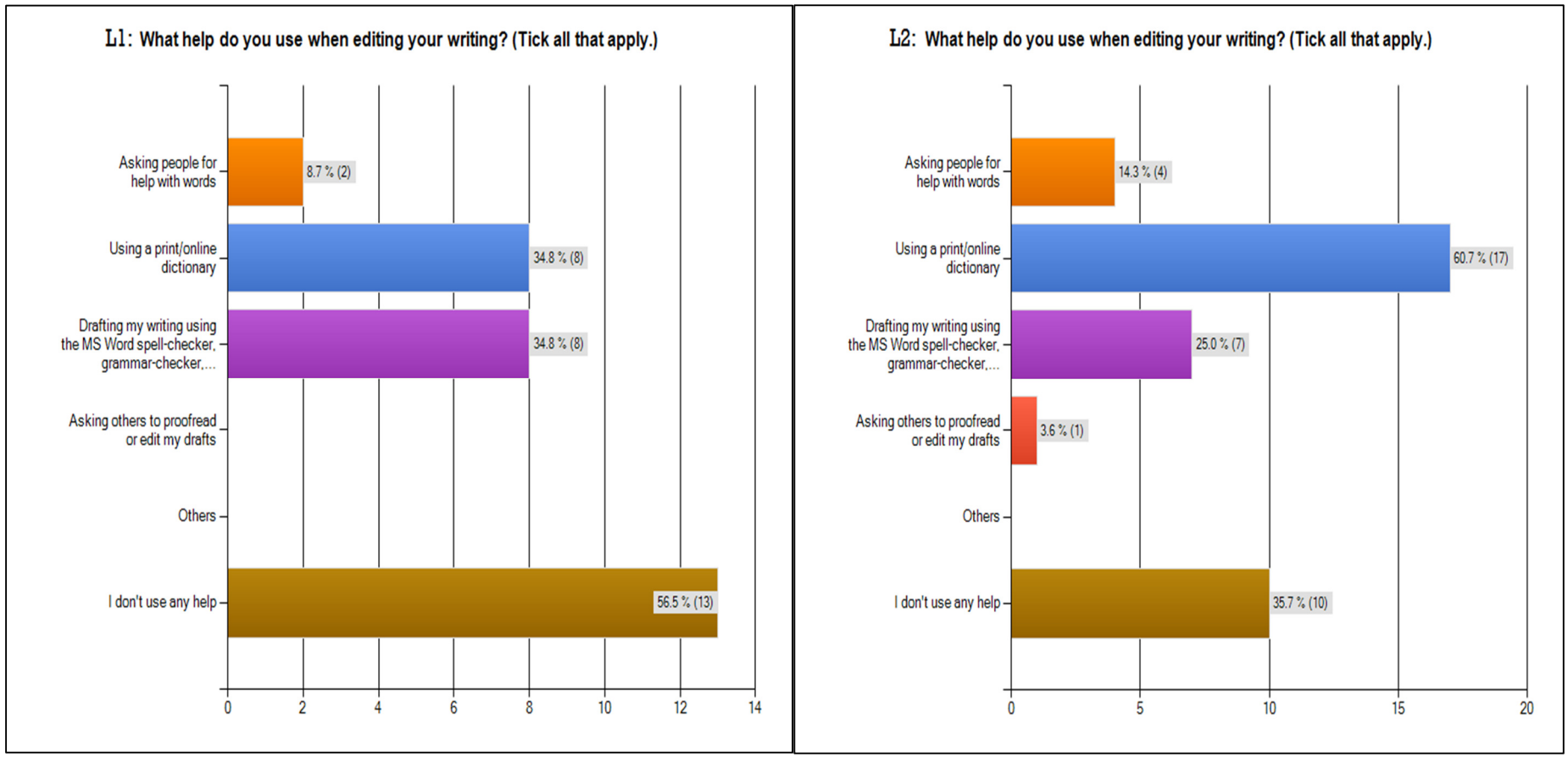


Figure 5.13: Type of editing done to writing before posting

The survey data further revealed that L2 bloggers were not the only ones who edited their writing before posting, since even L1 bloggers for whom English was their first language admitted to editing their blogs. Of the 51 bloggers who edited their writing before posting, 45.1% were L1 while 54.9% were L2. However, there is a difference in the type of help they used when editing their writing. 56.5% (n=13) of L1 bloggers were confident enough to self-edit their writing without relying on any type of help whereas the majority of L2 bloggers (60.7% or n=17) who edited their

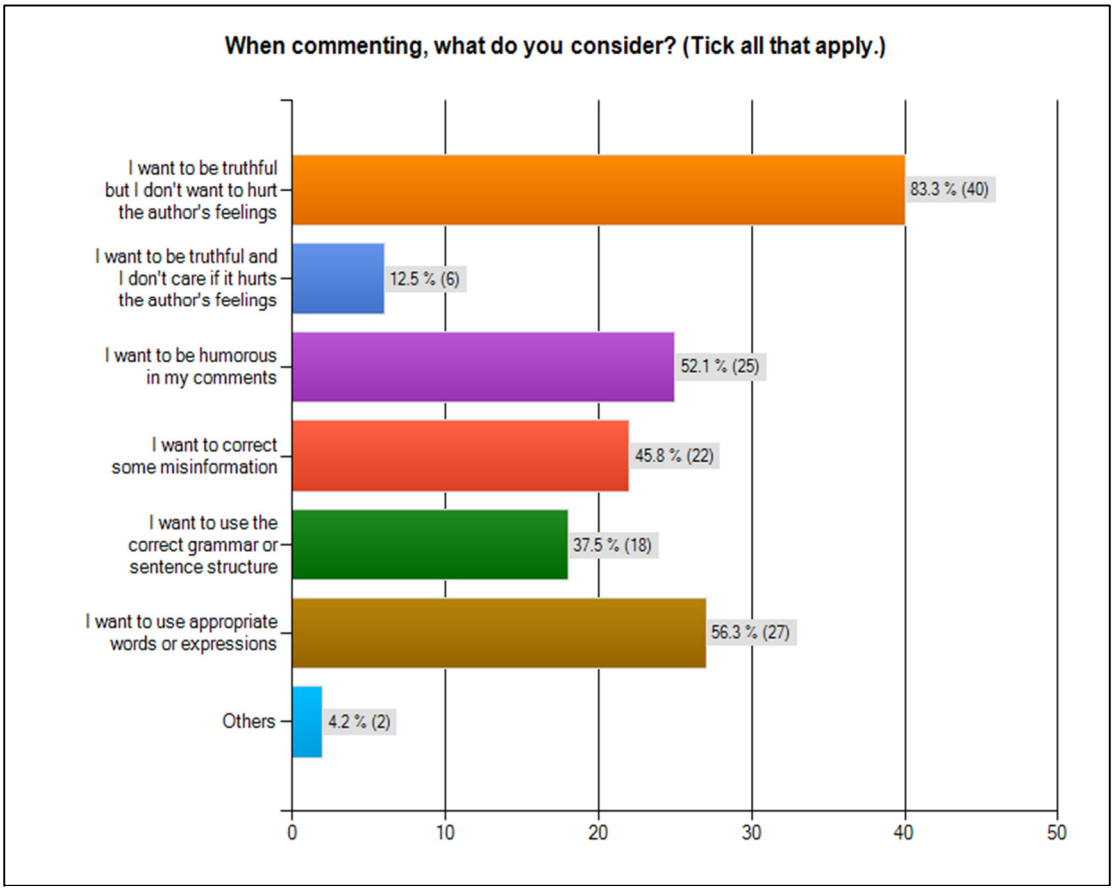
writing preferred to use print or online dictionaries (see Figure 5.14). Being computer-based in nature, online dictionaries were clearly the easiest type of writing help available when blogging.



L1 BLOGGERS **L2 BLOGGERS**

Figure 5.14: Type of help used when editing writing

When posting comments on other blogs, the respondents practise the same caution and considerations as when posting their blog entries. Figure 5.15 shows that a majority of the bloggers felt responsible for the comments they posted on others' blogs, although they did want to be truthful in their comments (83.3%). In fact, more of them were concerned about the recipients' perception of their comments rather than whether they were using suitable words or expressions (56.3%), or appropriate grammar and sentence construction (37.5%). Only 12.5% felt that even though the truth might hurt, they would comment truthfully.



	If 'Others' (please specify)
1	I want to support my friend and let him/her know that I'm there for him/her.
2	I want to correct their error in the language that they use.

Figure 5.15: Considerations made when constructing blog comments

The majority also indicated that their main language concerns when composing their comments were whether they were using the correct grammar, words and expressions (Figure 5.16).

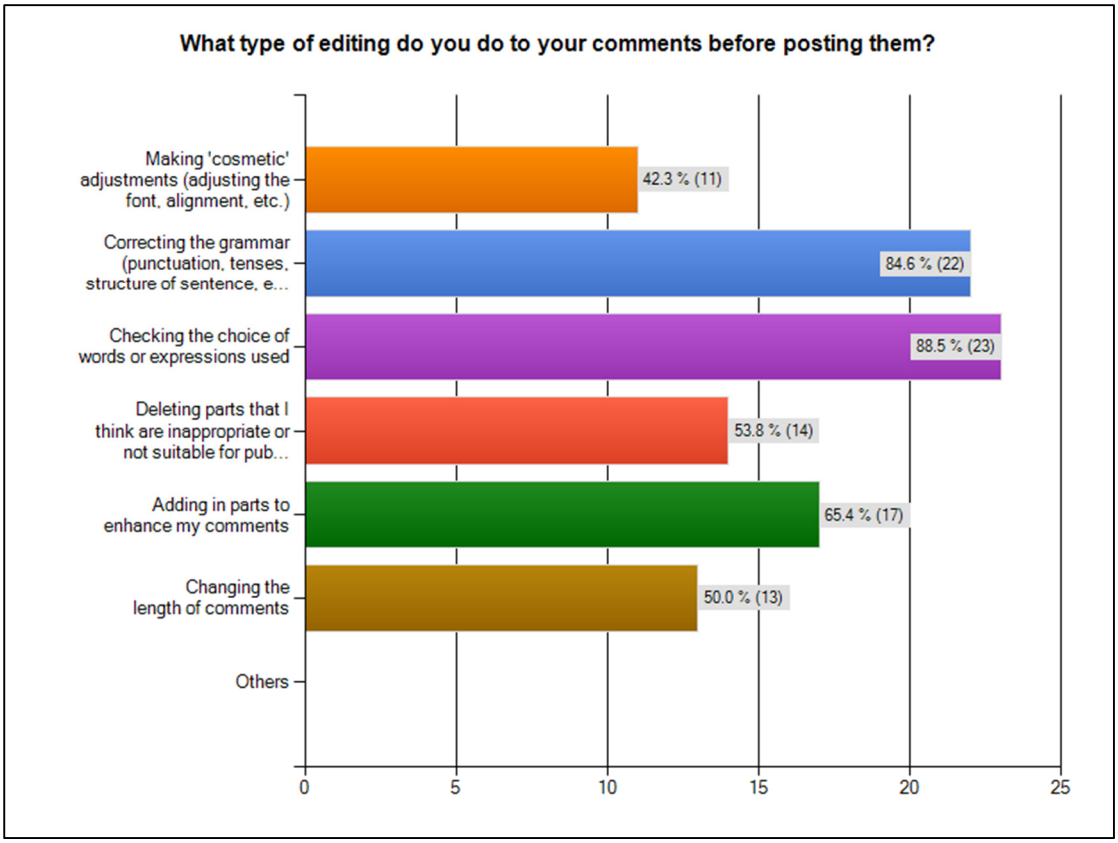
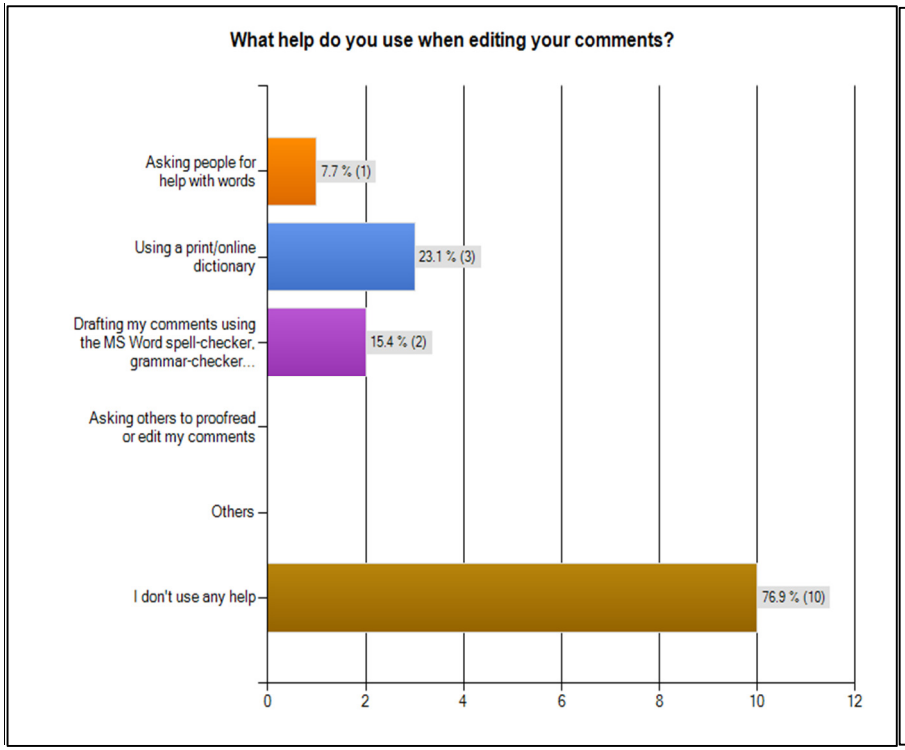
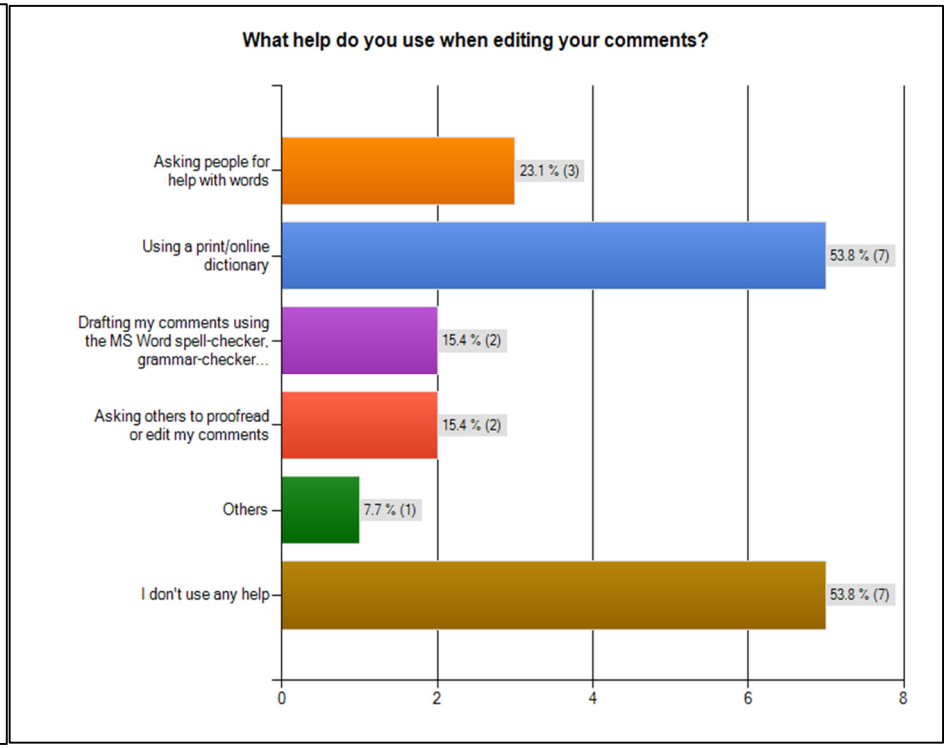


Figure 5.16: Type of editing done to comments before posting

Just as when editing their blog writing, L1 bloggers edited their comments using not only less assistance but also a smaller range of types of assistance than L2 bloggers. Again, print or online dictionaries were the most popular aid used to draft their comments (Figure 5.17).



L1 BLOGGERS



L2 BLOGGERS

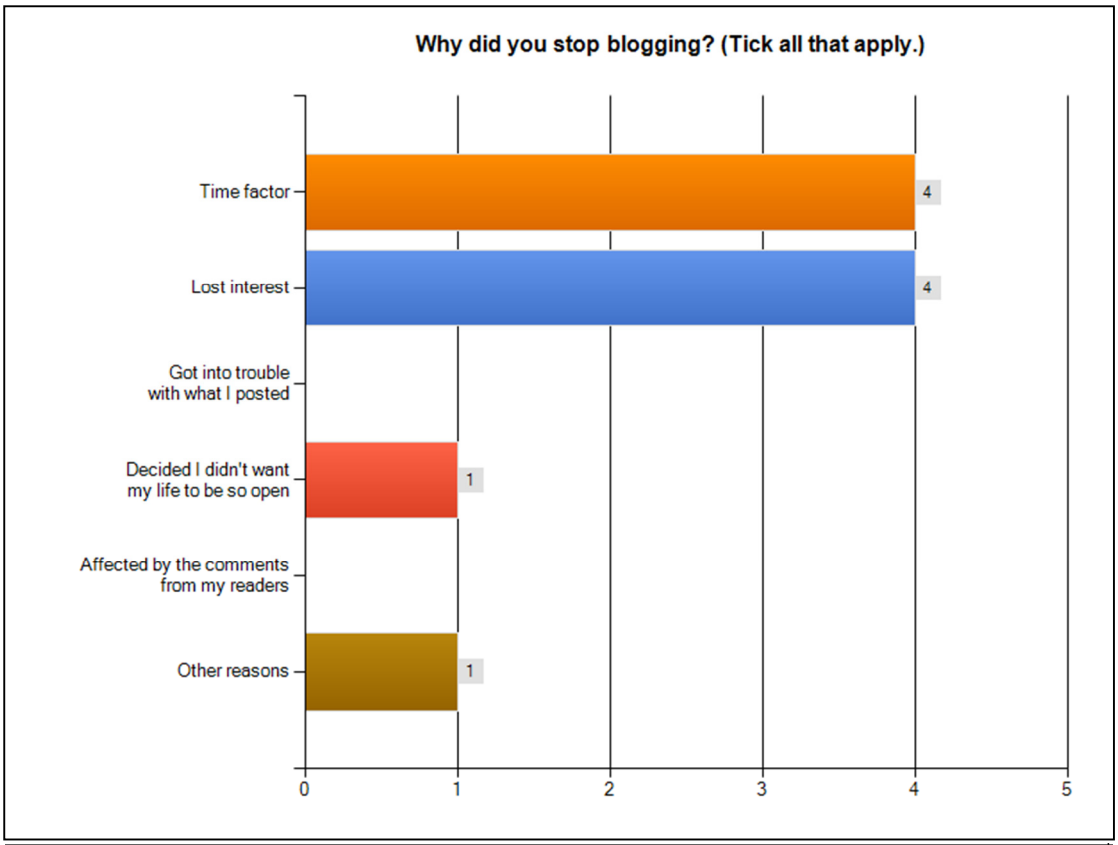
Figure 5.17: Type of help used when editing comments (L1 & L2)

As mentioned in the earlier section, though less than 10% of the respondents indicated that they started blogging to improve their writing, in reality, many were paying heed to how they were drafting their entries and comments, thus making it into a process of improving their writing skills.

5.1.4 Their Likes and Dislikes about Blogging

What attracted the current bloggers to continue blogging and what made the former bloggers stop? The two most popular reasons for blogging were the opportunity to express their thoughts, feelings, and ideas in writing (>40%), and the freedom of not being censured or corrected for their writing which blogging afforded them (>20%). The respondents loved the liberated feeling of being able to write as they liked. Their other reasons included: being able to keep friends posted on happenings in their life; having an audience read their writing; sharing their life experiences; being able to read back their recorded writing as a form of self-discovery or for self-reflection; blogging as a form of stress relief; to practise, improve, and publish their writing; and having fun while blogging. Only less than 10% saw blogging as a way of escaping from reality or as an opportunity to make friends, making their blogs less of an opportunity for social interaction and more for self-expression. Not many mentioned the anonymity factor in blogging as the appeal although those who had stopped blogging missed having the freedom to express themselves anonymously.

For those who had stopped blogging (50% of them stopped blogging in less than a year), loss of interest and blogging being a time-consuming activity were the key reasons (see Figure 5.18). They had started their blogs because it was the 'in' thing. Especially with the popularity of social networking sites taking on the functions of keeping in touch with friends, blogging for them ceased to be appealing. Only one former blogger stopped because of lack of readers, citing his uninteresting blog as a reason.



	If 'Other reasons', please specify:
1	my blog wasnt interesting...im not good at writing

Figure 5.18: Why the bloggers stopped blogging

Although the positive characteristics of blogging attracted the respondents to begin blogging, these same characteristics were also viewed by them as

a necessary evil. Those who were still actively blogging cited the 'public' factor of blogging as a major turn-off (54.3%), while in Figure 5.18, a former blogger named 'loss of privacy' as one factor for not continuing to blog. The main objection was spamming and unsolicited criticism which could be rather harsh and the culprits were usually anonymous *commentors*. This paradoxical perception of blogging is in contrast to their reasons for blogging, i.e. the liberty to freely express their thoughts, feelings, and ideas without censure or correction. Even as blogging provides the freedom of expression, the respondents expect other bloggers to practise social etiquette or netiquette. How this freedom is handled therefore depends very much on individual character and self-censure. While a majority of these bloggers were mindful and careful to edit their writing for public viewing (see Figures 5.15) and expected the same of others, they were acutely aware of the fact that there were rogue bloggers or *commentors* who did not follow blogging ethics. Employing measures to block out such comments would take up time and effort which made blogging more tedious and less appealing.

Other dislikes which the bloggers had about blogging included: having to practise self-censure and therefore not being able to be totally honest because they were aware that what was written on a public platform could come back to haunt them; not having anything to write about, resulting in 'random' topics in their blog entries; and it being a time consuming effort especially when uploading pictures to their blog.

5.1.5 Disclosure of Personal Identifying Information and Privacy Issues

> *Bloggers do not have the right to keep their identities secret, High Court rules.*
>
> *(Edwards, 17 June, 2009)*

When blogging was first made available on the *Worldwide Web*, the idea was to allow for instant, easy publication of any individual's writing or work to enable people to have a voice and connect with others. Some bloggers choose to remain anonymous in their blogs or assume a false identity. This is usually employed in personal blogs about very private matters or by those who want to avoid getting into trouble at work for blogging negative views about their workplace. Some reveal their real identities only to existing offline friends who are linked to their blogs, while remaining anonymous to chance readers or other followers. The anonymity cover is used to protect themselves too when blogging about sensitive matters which would normally not be discussed in public.

Desiring to be anonymously public is a paradoxical situation, more so in an Asian context where the people seem to be generally more socially reserved. 69% of the respondents, including those who had not provided any information containing their personal identifying information (PII), such as their weblog URL, name, or contact details for interviews, preferred to have their PII remain confidential. In actual fact, those who had not revealed their PII were unknown even to the researcher. Respondents who provided their PII but indicated they would like to remain anonymous too, had used their real identity in their blogs and

photographs which clearly identified them in their blogs. Yet these respondents were uneasy about their blogs and themselves being identified. This is largely because of bloggers who stoked feelings on multiracial issues in their writings on issues in Malaysia, causing the authorities to threaten ways to muffle them and which eventually led to Section 114A of the Evidence Act 1950 (Presumption of Fact in Publication) in 2012 which states that "a person whose name, photograph or pseudonym appears on any publication depicting himself as the owner, host, administrator, editor or sub-editor, or who in any manner facilitates to publish or re-publish the publication is presumed to have published or re-published the contents of the publication unless the contrary is proved" (The Commissioner of Law Revision, 2012), which effectively holds such a person accountable for content published, inclusive of all online content.

5.2 Summary of Chapter Five

This chapter has discussed the results gleaned from the online survey. It has addressed questions pertaining to the role blogging plays in the lives of respondents who blog or who had blogged before and how much emphasis they put on blogging, by examining their blogging patterns. It has also considered questions on their attitude towards writing their blog posts and towards posting comments in blogs. Where matters pertaining to a disclosure of their PII were concerned, these respondents were wary of how they would be identified, with some of them restricting access to their

blogs or moving their blogs after they had voluntarily given their weblog URLs in the survey.

What is significant from these findings is that blogging was largely used for self-discovery and self-expression by these young people and that they were rather mindful of how their writing would be perceived by readers or how it would affect them. The majority of those who posted comments were consciously mindful of not hurting others with their comments. This is a stark contrast with current blogging practices in Malaysia where the Sedition Act is constantly invoked to take to task, bloggers whose writing are controversial or unjustified. The difference could be due to the topics they blogged about or their status as tertiary level students influencing their attitudes regarding their blog writing.

CHAPTER 6: DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS - QUALITATIVE INTERVIEWS AND NARRATIVES

6.0 Analysis of Qualitative Interviews and Narratives

RQ2: How are they using this medium of communication?
RQ3: How do they use English in their blogs?

The online survey findings have revealed that blogging was used in two main ways by the participants; as a tool for self-discovery (Papacharissi, 2004; Trammell, Tarkowski, Hofmokl, & Sapp, 2006) and as a communication channel with friends (Nardi, Schiano, Gumbrecht, & Swartz, 2004).

To obtain information about the participants' language background which leads to their views and attitudes towards using selected languages and varieties of English in their English blogs, qualitative interviews were conducted with six selected blogger-respondents (See Chapter 4.3.2). The interviews were also conducted to engage these social actors in an effort to further understand the 'why' and 'how' of their blog communication.

In this chapter, the findings from each respondent's narratives about their language learning and language use experiences are discussed in turn to allow for a deeper and richer discussion of their narratives. The chapter then ends with a summary of the main findings of the analysis. Pseudonyms

are used where permission to use their PII had not been expressedly given. This chapter answers RQ2 and RQ3.

To avoid confusion over the terms used to describe the different Chinese languages, a distinction is made between 'ethnic language' and 'heritage language'. This distinction is necessary because although the interviewees were Malaysian Chinese, they were of different Chinese descent and therefore learnt and/or spoke different Chinese languages. Besides, being Chinese did not mean they would know their ethnic language or their heritage language. In this thesis, 'ethnic language' is used to refer to the common spoken language used by the Chinese people and it has a common written system used by all Chinese heritage languages. In Malaysia, it is known as the 'Mandarin' language. It is also the only Chinese language formally taught and used as the medium of instruction (MoI) in Chinese schools, and used in official Chinese functions and formal situations. Mandarin is similar to Putonghua in the People's Republic of China, where it is its official national language (http://www.chinalanguage.com). On the other hand, 'heritage language' is used in this thesis to refer to the participants' paternal spoken language. It is the language which identifies the ancestral clan they belong to: the Hokkien people's heritage language is Hokkien while the Cantonese people's heritage language is Cantonese but both the Hokkien and Cantonese' ethnic language is Mandarin. There are even sub-divisions within the different clans with very minor language differences and some social differences (http://www.chinalanguage.com). Though the heritage

language is typically but not necessarily the first in the order of language acquisition, it is sometimes not acquired at all.

This definition of a heritage language is similar in part to Valdes' (2000) definition where heritage speakers are individuals raised in homes where a language other than English is spoken, and who are to some degree bilingual in English and the heritage language. Although the original definition is English-centred, it can be substituted with any other dominant language so long as the heritage language was first but not completely acquired because of the individual's switch to another dominant language (Polinsky & Kagan, 2007). The respondents' narratives in this study disclose their heritage language through which they also reveal their sense of identity in the form of language choices they made in their daily life and in their blogs. The structure of the interviews and the manner in which they were carried out allowed for this information to be revealed (see Chapter 4.3.2.2 and 4.3.2.3).

The subsequent sections inform the background details of the languages acquired by the blogger-interviewees and together with their narratives, they show a pattern of language usage which expressed more than just a preference for or proficient in a particular language. Engaging the social actors in the interviews enabled this knowledge to be acquired in the current study.

6.1 Ezdude's Story

6.1.1 Introduction to Ezdude

Ezdude is an L1 speaker of English. He was 19 years old when interviewed in 2009 and was pursuing a diploma in the field of bio-technology where the MoI and reference materials were mostly in English. He lives in Johor Bahru, an urban area in Malaysia where a mixture of English, Malay, Mandarin, and Hokkien are used in daily interactions. Media entertainment and the use of language around Ezdude is predominantly Mandarin because of Johor Bahru's proximity to Singapore where Mandarin and English are mainly used. Nevertheless, his dominant language in terms of proficiency and usage is English, followed by formal Malay learnt in school. Although he can understand a modicum of Mandarin, Ezdude depends heavily on English subtitles when watching televised shows in Mandarin. Otherwise, most of his daily activities provide him with opportunities to use mainly English. Ezdude represents the typical Malaysian Chinese whose English is L1 and who does not know both his ethnic and heritage languages.

6.1.2 Language Learning Background

In this study, Ezdude is labelled as an L1 speaker of English because he learnt English from birth and it is his first and dominant language. Although his parents communicate with each other in Mandarin, they only use English with their children, thus ensuring that their exposure to English while growing up was constant. Ezdude attributed his repertoire of the

English vocabulary to his voracious reading appetite and the English reading materials he was constantly exposed to while growing up. He hardly knew his heritage language or the heritage language of his mother as both heritage languages were never used by his parents when communicating with him or his siblings. However, this was of no consequence as he was able to conduct his daily activities using English alone.

It is not surprising then that Ezdude is conversant in English and writes his blog in English. However, it is not what language this English-speaking Malaysian Chinese uses but the variety of English he chooses to use in his activities and the reasons behind the choices which are important in this research.

6.1.3 Language Use Experiences

Ezdude's language environment gives him plenty of opportunity to use English. The variety he uses at home is CME, and he uses both SME and CME with his English-speaking friends but only CME with Chinese-speaking friends who speak limited English.

During the interview, Ezdude expressed difficulty in trying to recall the variety of English he had used in various situations because using English was an unconscious and natural act for him. The same observation was made of the other interviewees who used English effortlessly. On the other hand, participants who had struggled to learn English and whose English

was not a first language, were able to remember with more clarity the details of their language use experiences.

Ezdude's active involvement in religious activities also provides him with plenty of opportunities to use English. This includes having regular contact with Christian youths from all over Malaysia during regional youth meetings, most of whom speak the standard variety of English that is taught in Malaysian schools. It is this involvement which provides him with a lot of opportunities to use SME. The activities give the youngsters leadership opportunities where they use, as Ezdude described, ''good English but not necessarily standard English, with a Malaysian flair''. What Ezdude means is the SME variety. Ezdude says he switches to this variety too when taking on the role of a leader on stage, which he says is mostly an involuntary reaction that shifts into place to show seriousness and authority. He acknowledges however that the youths all strive to use better English when leading the congregation, although there is no written rule whatsoever which dictates the variety they should use in that position. There is a subconscious need to show a good example even in language use when in a position of power as they tend to associate the more standard varieties of English with people in power and in the upper echelons of society.

In contrast to the SME variety he used when in the role of leadership, Ezdude uses CME which he calls 'street English' with other members in his own home church. This is a bilingual church where religious meetings are conducted in both English and Mandarin (English interpreted into Mandarin or Mandarin interpreted into English). Although the regional

youth gatherings and his home church meetings are both religious in nature, Ezdude switches to the colloquial version in his home church where the members are mainly Chinese-speaking. His reason is simple – to reduce awkwardness by using the variety of English with which the other interactants are more familiar. This is also the variety which he uses out of habit because it is the variety he uses at home. He feels that using SME would put off those who do not use this variety. Using CME is therefore a move to bond or to identify with the group.

Ezdude's discourse with interactants from his home church is peculiar, though not unusual. Although it is a mono-ethnic group, one interactant speaks in a language while the other interactants reply in another. Ezdude's Chinese-speaking Chinese friends would speak to him in Mandarin while he replied in 'street English'. His interactants are bilinguals who, although can speak in English, choose to speak in Mandarin out of an unconscious habit mediated by social factors. Living in an area where most of the people speak mostly in Mandarin and where entertainment is mostly in Mandarin, they naturally speak in the language that is frequently used. Unfortunately for those who are not bilingual like Ezdude, they can only reply in English although they can understand what is being spoken in Mandarin.

This scenario of mixed languages within a mono-ethnic group is not an isolated phenomenon. Many English-speaking Chinese parents in Malaysia, like Ezdude's, taught their children English as their first and only language for them to have a head start in life because of the perception of

English language as the door to better educational progress and opportunities. The results are 'bananas' (yellow on the outside, white on the inside), a term reserved for English-speaking Chinese who do not speak their ethnic language or heritage languages (Thong, 2007; Wooi, 2009; The Nation, 2014). This label may be seen as a racial slur elsewhere but 'bananas' in Malaysia use the label on themselves as a self-deprecating admission to being unable to speak any of the Chinese languages. On the other hand, Chinese-speaking Chinese parents believe that the Chinese should not forget their roots and their identity as Chinese, which should be manifested through their ability to speak the Chinese language(s), resulting in the peculiar discourse which Ezdude exchanged with his home church members.

In recent years, however, the trend seems to favour the Chinese-speaking Chinese parents' decision to have their children taught their ethnic or heritage languages. More and more Chinese parents are letting their L1 English-speaking children learn their ethnic language at an early age. Ezdude, however, does not find it offensive to be labelled a 'banana', saying that it "isn't too much of a big deal" and "I deal with people that can speak English most of the time", expressing that it does not affect his perception of himself as a Chinese.

A point to note is that Ezdude, an L1 user of English, is able to shift up and down the varieties of English continuum with ease. Malaysian L2 users of English often do this too as CME needs no formal learning and is a distinct Malaysian culture used especially in informal communications (Pillai,

2012). Ezdude claims that he can instantaneously shift variety to suit the one being used in a particular setting in face-to-face conversations. However, when interacting using a variety or language different from the one he usually employs with a particular interlocutor, Ezdude says he needs to take "a bit more time to piece the words together" to mentally prepare himself for the change. For example, when using SME in a formal situation with a friend with whom he usually uses CME in informal situations, he needs to arrange his thoughts before speaking in SME. This seems to contradict his earlier revelation that he unconsciously shifts into SME when in a leadership role. Therefore, for Ezdude, being able to shift varieties seamlessly depends on familiarity of usage with specific interlocutors and settings.

Figure 6.1 is put together to clearly illustrate the two different language backgrounds of L1 users of English in Malaysia. Ezdude is one of the many typical L1 English users from **English-speaking Chinese families** in Malaysia who were not taught their heritage or ethnic language. By contrast, Cucumber, the participant in the pilot interview, represents the typical L1 English users from **English-and-Chinese-speaking Chinese families** in Malaysia who were taught their heritage or ethnic language alongside English from birth. The resulting output, i.e. the languages they are able to use, clearly shows the difference.

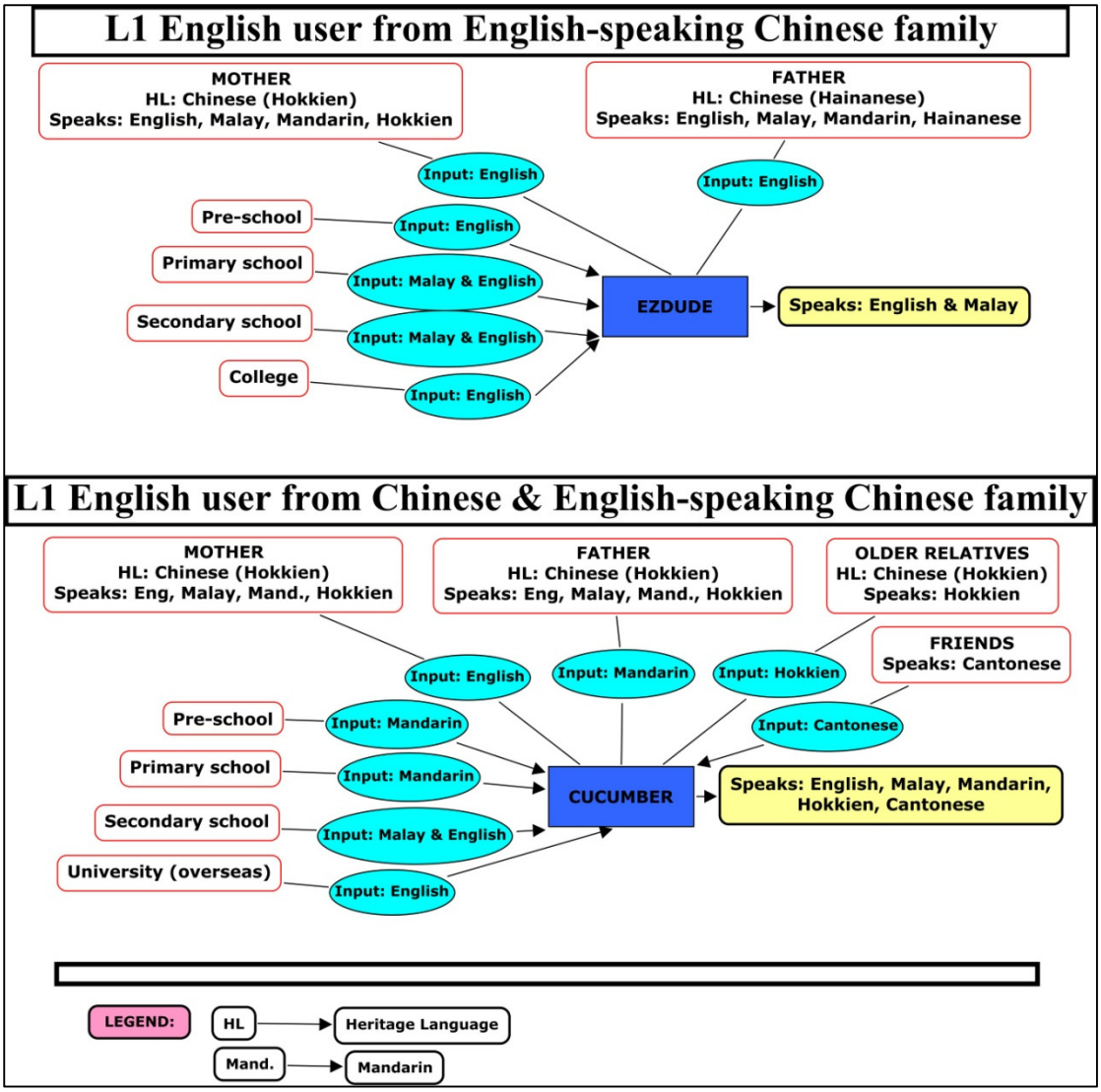


Figure 6.1: L1 users' language background and language output

6.1.4 Perception of or Attitude towards English

How does Ezdude's perception of the varieties of English used by him and the people around him affect his choice to use them? Using what he calls 'street English' is simply a means for him to convey the message clearly and in a simplified manner, in reaction to the variety of English used by his interactants (Pillai, 2012).

He perceives 'street English' to be 'not proper English' as it is syntactically incorrect in SME. He provided three examples of what he understands as

'street English': ''Hey, you want to go there?'', ''What we want to do later?'' and ''Where you want to eat?'' In all three examples, the auxiliary verbs were omitted. He then proceeded to demonstrate his ability by providing well-constructed sentences in SME in order to emphasize that using CME does not mean he lacked the proficiency to use SME, asking: ''What do you think of that place?'' and ''Would you like to go there later?'' These and his blog entries prove that he has both the standard and the colloquial varieties in his repertoire. In an example of a blog entry reproduced here, Ezdude wrote of himself in mostly Standard English:

> Ezdude, how could you think this way? ... Why are you such a nervous wreck? Why do you hurt people so easily? ... It really does hurt to know that I can't be the perfect man, the guy who gushes out compassion, the guy who is patient to the point that people can feel at ease around him, or the guy who is so deep in his love for God. To put it simply, you want to be a good man, but you just can't be (Ezdude's blog, 13th Mar 2009).

Besides using SME when in the role of leadership, Ezdude also uses SME with friends from Singapore who use SME, but CME with Malaysian friends. His accommodation is for social acceptance and to reduce social tension. Using the appropriate variety is a cohesive device to signal that he is one of them. Attempting to use a more standard variety than the one used by the others in the group, especially in informal communication, can be perceived as trying to exert authority over them by his choice of language. The variety selected for use is therefore important to convey one's affinity to the group.

There are occasions, however, when Ezdude intentionally switches to SME to mimic the British in their Standard English accent. This intentional and exaggerated accent is generally used in jest to mock the manner in which some Malaysians put on airs when speaking using the Standard English accent (Lee, S.K., 2003).

Having both the SME and CME varieties in his repertoire is certainly an advantage which enables Ezdude to shift in and out effortlessly to suit the setting and relationship with his interactants. In a nutshell, Ezdude is conscious of his use of the appropriate variety of ME in different settings for solidarity, acceptance, and to reduce awkwardness among the interactants. Far from indicating a lack of proficiency in the language, his intentional use of CME in the right setting is a tool of empowerment.

6.1.5 Blogging Experience

Ezdude's L1 and dominant language is English and therefore naturally chooses to blog in English. His blog is a personal diary for reflective thinking and for writing personal thoughts about his Christian living. Monologues in nature, his blog entries receive few comments which he appreciates as constructive feedback to help him judge his own thoughts.

Ezdude writes his blog in SME as he does with all other types of writing. He admits to being conscious of using SME in his blog, saying "I would check it before I post it to make sure that I didn't make any glaring mistakes" and that blogging gives him the opportunity to practise his writing skills. However, he does occasionally code-mix in Malay if it helps his readers to

relate to his message. Otherwise, his blog is written mostly in SME as he is aware of blogs' wider readership which transcends the Malaysian borders where international readers would probably not understand CME.

After having written his blog entries for almost four years (at the time of the interview), Ezdude thinks that his writing in general has improved as he consciously writes in full sentences, even in instant messaging (IM), which is unusual because people generally chat on IM in short truncated sentences and abbreviations to facilitate faster writing and reading.

In summary, there seems to be a tendency for Ezdude to write using a more Standard English but to speak in CME, especially in informal situations. This is similar in Cucumber's case where he intentionally uses CME although SME is in his repertoire. These two young Malaysians prefer and enjoy speaking in CME in informal settings and appear to be proud to use this variety - English *a la*-Malaysian style - which marks them as Malaysians. Using this variety is seen as empowering them to effectively convey messages and situate their social relationships. To them, the effectiveness of the communication is fundamental, not who owns the variety or how correct their language should be. The extensive exposure to the different varieties of English while growing up has given Ezdude the advantage and liberty of being able to select the variety to use in different situations and with different interactants.

6.2 Camin's Story

6.2.1 Introduction to Camin

Camin was a 21-year-old undergraduate in International Business studies when interviewed in 2009. She was living in Kuala Lumpur where English, Malay, and Cantonese were the languages used in daily transactions.

Like Ezdude, Camin's use of English includes reading online and print materials. However, English is only prominently used for her studies. Being at the other end of the pole from Ezdude, Camin is an example of an English-and-Mandarin-speaking Malaysian Chinese whose dominant language is Cantonese.

6.2.2 Language Learning and Language Use Experiences

Camin's heritage language is Cantonese and which she learnt from birth. An L2 speaker of English, her first exposure to English was at kindergarten. When she started primary education where the MoI was in Malay and living in a Malay community at that time, her dominant language was Malay. It was easier for her to communicate in Malay with her Malay friends and neighbours who did not speak much English. English was only used with friends from an English-educated background and there was little motivation to use English.

Camin formally learnt her ethnic language, Mandarin, at the age of 11 for a year, using Mandarin only if it was the common language between her and her interlocutors. She did not fully master the tonal system (*pinyin*) because

of lack of use and this state somewhat troubled her, as revealed in one of her blog entries (see section 6.2.3).

However, she felt vindicated after successfully learning Korean. She had been captivated by the Korean culture she saw in the televised soap operas when she was 14 and decided to formally learn the language, managing to reach Level 4 (Intermediate level) of the Test of Proficiency in Korean, which helped her win the Best Speaker title in a Korean speech competition. The title came with a sponsored trip to Korea and eligibility for a scholarship from the Korean embassy. Her achievement released her from feeling like a failure for not mastering the *pinyin*. It was intrinsic motivation (Noels, Pelletier, et al., 2000) which helped her master the Korean language as she reinforced her learning by participating in Korean online forums and blogging in Korean on her English blog.

However, her learning English was externally motivated (Dornyei, 1994). The reality of the importance of English for further education and work only became more evident to her when she was in upper secondary school, motivating her to speak more in English, take part in English debates, and enrol for an intensive course in English for Academic Purposes (EAP) to improve her proficiency. While she found herself using more English in her tertiary education which was conducted solely in English, it was limited to written assignments and communication with academic staff. The variety she used in academic settings was SME because of her perception of her lecturers' expectations of her as a university student. Camin claimed that it was not easy for her because she

was only confident using SME in prepared situations such as during debates or in-class presentations, and only when she spoke better English than her interlocutors.

It was at this time that she started a blog in English which provided her with the opportunity to write in English. However, she did not consciously use it for that purpose or for further improvements in English proficiency. There was no motivation for it as she had other languages in her repertoire to help her conduct her daily transactions and her lecturers were always willing to explain difficult terms and concepts to her in simple English. Although she was fascinated by beautiful English expressions, whose meanings she said were conveyed in a beautiful way and were therefore more pleasant to the ear (Camin, e-mail interview dated 24 Mar 2009), she only perceived it as a language for educational opportunities and for work.

While Camin consciously used SME in academic surroundings, she shifted into CME in informal situations, ending her sentences with the particles *lah* and *mah* and mixing the codes. She called this mixing, *Manglish* or *rojak* which she said was produced off the cuff. For Camin, sentences ending with the particle *lah* but without code-mixing are SME or 'proper' English. In her opinion, *Manglish* or *rojak* must contain code-mixed words. She referred to another code-mixed variety as 'broken English', which she defined as spoken or written English which included the use of mixed

Chinese languages such as [10]*kiasu* and [11]*kepoh*. Although these words are well-known and understood among Malaysians, they are not recognisable elsewhere in the world and Camin did not think this variety proper enough to use. It is also similar to what Ezdude calls 'street English'.

6.2.3 Language as Part of Her Identity

Camin perceived language as a part of her Chinese identity and was therefore embarrassed by her awkward *pinyin*. Camin is not alone in this perception as the older Chinese generation and Chinese-educated Chinese in Malaysia typically consider it a disgrace if Chinese do not to know their ethnic language and are seen to have forgotten their roots and identity by abandoning their language (Wong & Xiao, 2010). Camin's inability to master her ethnic language must have therefore been frustrating especially when she has such an aptitude for learning other languages. An extract of her blog entry which expressed these feelings is reproduced here (Information within the square brackets fronted by an asterisk is not part of her quotation).

> I have never studied in Chinese school before, although I am a Chinese speaking Cantonese. I was illiterate in Chinese for the first 13 years of my life. … I wondered myself, I myself is a Chinese so I must know a bit of Chinese. I cannot be a "banana" all the time ... Malulah *[Malay word: embarrassing] if continuing like that ... Now, I can manage to read some Chinese, … I don't know, writing Chinese is a kind of taxing for me. Plus my

[10] *Kiasu* (adjective): (of a person) very anxious not to miss an opportunity, usually in a grasping, selfish attitude (http://oxforddictionaries.com). Origin: Hokkien word (scared to lose).

[11] *Kepoh*: nosy or a busybody. Usually refers to someone who like to invade other people's privacy by asking intrusive questions so that they can gossip about it. Origin: Hokkien word.

> Chinese handwriting is not that pretty either ... My pinyin is bad. Why? Because it comes in Mandarin. Yes, Cantonese and Mandarin are mostly similar but sometimes when I want to type a certain word in sms, I can't pronounce the correct pinyin and ended up ... typing nothing or typing the wrong word (Camin's blog, 3rd Oct 2007).

However, after having successfully acquired a foreign language which is not widely spoken by Malaysians, she felt empowered by the added advantage she had over others, and her feelings of inadequacy were lessened.

6.2.4 Camin's Blog

6.2.4.1 Her Blog and Privacy Issues

Camin took to blogging in order to participate in discussions with her friends about blogging although it was not used as a main mode of their communication. They occasionally chatted in the chatbox function within the blog but their main mode of communication was through Instant Messaging (IM), the telephone, and e-mails.

Camin did not share much about her life in her blog for fear of backlash from her readers. Her apprehension was expressed in an entry where she wrote, 'I won't post much of my pictures here. After all, this is an open blog' (30 May, 2008). Her personal belief was that blog comments should be encouraging and supportive in nature. In order to protect her personal space from unsolicited comments, she rarely accepted 'friend' invitations from strangers or people who were not identifiable through a valid blog address.

Camin acknowledged that she was a private person and wanted to be as unidentifiable as possible on her blog, but she wanted her blog to express her identity to show ownership. This was done by including her family name as part of the name of her blog. It was sufficient for her to have a sense of ownership as her friends knew who owned the blog. Camin was more interested in her blog as a space she owned rather than in the writing activity of blogging. The emotional attachment she had with her blog was evident; she took great pride in custom designing her blog, periodically updating the design, and was greatly offended whenever unsolicited messages were posted on it because her blog was not for random social networking. Her blog was not a vehicle for her to convey thoughts to the world but a personal space she could call her own.

6.2.4.2 Camin's Blog Writing

Initially, Camin wrote rather substantially in her earlier posts. On 30th May, 2008, she composed six long paragraphs about herself, written in both SME and CME. However, she later wrote fewer texts in her blog, preferring to let photos and pictures do the talking instead. In one entry, she wrote, "because I'm lazy to record the happenings in detailed in my life. It's different with photos. Photos explain everything" (23 Dec, 2007).

Her blogging was not about writing but about the sharing of information and experiences. Her entry on 15th Jan 2009 was made up of a series of 12 photographs of a group of Korean artistes she idolised without a single word in that entry to explain the photos.

The interview with Camin, however, revealed that the process of posting photographs was not necessarily easier than writing texts. In uploading a series of pictures which presented the storyline of a televised soap opera in one blog entry, Camin took a whole day to complete the process. Clearly, it was not the process of writing entries that she enjoyed but the sharing of her interests in her blog.

Camin's blogging was not consistent; it could be six entries in a day or none at all. She rarely edited her entries unless it was to add more pictures. She was not compelled to write something whenever she logged in. Her blog is not an extension of her life where she expresses her deepest emotions or problems she faces in life, or where she discusses matters or networks with others. It is just a personal space where she goes to relax, to share her interest and her passion whenever she wants to.

Camin's Blogging Language

Camin's blogposts are composed of a mixture of a few languages. Sometimes, she wrote entirely in English, Korean, or Mandarin, but at other times, her entries were written in a mixture of many languages. The entries in Mandarin, however, were not written by her but were reproduced from various online sources in the forms of song lyrics or movie reviews. Posts which were written in Korean and in English were either her compositions or song lyrics and comments imported from other online sources.

As mentioned earlier, Camin does not use her blog as a means for writing practice and is not concerned about the accuracy of the language when blogging. She claims that the variety of English she uses in her blog which

is a combination of SME and CME is the same as the one she uses offline with her friends. If she uses inaccurate expressions, she does not think it necessary to look for the correct expression if the meaning of the message is comprehensible. For example, in her 23rd Nov 2007 entry, she wrote that 'the price costs us "a leg and a hand" (sorry if i didn't get the word correctly)'. This reflects her attitude towards using English in her blog. The focus is on posting her entries. Therefore, Camin spends little time and effort when writing texts, wanting to finish writing her thoughts and ideas as soon as possible. However, composing photo blogs is different where she takes as much time as needed to ensure the photo sequences tell the story accurately.

When writing her entries, Camin thinks of the correct phrase in Cantonese and Malay first before translating it into English and writing it down. She uses this same strategy for other types of writing too. Like most L2 speakers of English, Camin uses her prior knowledge in other languages to help her compose phrases in English. For example, in her e-mail, Camin described herself as "a frog in the well" to explain her emotions as a first-timer on a flight to Korea. It is a phrase in Cantonese; *jing2 dai2 zhi1 wa1* (Cantonese: frog at the bottom of the well), and is related to a phrase in Malay; *katak di bawah tempurung* (Malay: frog under the coconut shell), both which describe an inexperienced person who does not know much about anything except her immediate surroundings. She then translates this concept into English in her thoughts before writing it down.

The choice of language in writing her entries is also a strategy. Although Camin blogs mainly in English, she blogs in Mandarin, Romanized Cantonese or Korean whenever she expresses private thoughts in her blog. This act limits the number of readers who can understand what she has written, thus protecting her blog to a certain degree. However, writing in Chinese or Korean requires tremendous effort as it involves importing the characters into the blog one by one while composing. This explains why she occasionally resorts to using the Romanized version instead, writing *zhou san* to express a greeting in Cantonese instead of the actual Chinese characters.

6.2.5 Conclusion to Camin's Story

To sum it up, Camin chronologically learnt the following languages; Cantonese, English, Malay, Mandarin, and Korean. In terms of proficiency, however, Mandarin was the weakest. The languages she used most frequently were Cantonese and English, with Cantonese being her dominant language in terms of proficiency and usage. Her choice of language in daily interactions was dependent on the language used by her interlocutors and the discourse situation. Her preference was Cantonese when the situations did not require her to use English.

English was mainly reserved for academic purposes and at the workplace. Shifting naturally in and out of languages and varieties of ME to accommodate her interlocutors was a subconscious act to identify with her interlocutors and to reduce awkwardness in the communication. This action is similar to Ezdude's where the variety of ME he used was dependent on

his interlocutors. However, unlike Ezdude whose dominant language was English and who depended solely on English to conduct his daily interactions, Camin perceived English to be a language only for education and for work. It was not a necessity for her daily life and this attitude was reflected in her blog writing.

However, her choice of language in blogging is a strategy. Blogging in English is simply a means for her sharing to be understood by others. This is usually about things which interest her. Blogging in Korean and other languages is for expression of private thoughts she wants to keep less exposed. This is a paradoxical situation since people would logically not share in their blogs things they want to keep private or at the very least set the blog setting to private so that it limits who can view it. Instead, Camin's strategy was to switch language. It is a case of wanting the liberty of expressing her thoughts and feelings at will yet wanting to keep them private. Nevertheless, it is always possible for the more inquisitive reader to use online translators to understand the messages she posted in Korean and for that matter, in any other languages.

6.3 Limau's Story

6.3.1 Introduction to Limau

Limau was a 19-year-old science student awaiting university admission when interviewed in 2009. She is Chinese-educated and can speak her ethnic language, Mandarin. Besides that, she also speaks English, Malay, and her heritage language, Cantonese.

Most of Limau's leisure-time is spent playing the piano and violin, the lessons of which necessitate the use of English. Therefore from young, Limau learnt the importance of having a good command of English. She believes that important information is always conveyed in English and therefore, her activities like reading, watching television, and surfing the Internet provide her with exposure to English. Besides these, she also reads a wide range of books in English.

6.3.2 History of Language Learning

Limau learnt Mandarin from birth. It is her home language and the learning continued through her kindergarten to primary education at a Chinese school. She first formally learnt English at kindergarten and Malay at primary school. She picked up Cantonese which allowed her to converse with her grandmother who lived with them when she was young. Her languages were learnt in this order: Mandarin, Cantonese, English and Malay. She continued learning English and Malay formally in secondary school where the MoI was in Malay, and also Mandarin as an additional subject because her strong foundation in Mandarin gave her an edge over other students. It can be surmised that her contact with Mandarin spans over a longer period of time than with English.

Her mastery over Mandarin is further consolidated by the fact that it is the medium of communication at home although Limau's mother can speak English. It was her mother who started her on the Peter & Jane reading series when she was in primary one. However, it was only when she started reading J.K. Rowling's books on Harry Potter in secondary school that her

interest in reading was kindled. She attributed her improvement in both spoken and written English to her interest in reading. The influence of stories (in Limau's case) and cultures (in Camin's case) is truly a powerful motivation to learning and using the language.

6.3.3 Language Use Experiences

Although Limau was aware of the importance of English, she found it difficult to use English at home because Mandarin was already entrenched as the medium of communication there. Limau said it "felt weird discussing things with my mum in English" when throughout her life she had only used Mandarin with her.

To increase her proficiency in English, she would use an electronic dictionary to look up difficult words she had read and jot them down in a notebook for learning. A book of about only an inch thick would take her approximately one month to finish reading but she did not think it a chore. As she said, "checking on words while reading may seem laborious but I don't mind, as long it does help. And when time goes on, I will not need the dictionary as often as before because I'm gaining my word knowledge." Some of those words eventually ended up in her daily conversations while others were useful only in written English. She also frequently refreshed her memory by studying her notebook of words and phrases until she could commit them to memory.

Despite all these efforts, however, Limau conceded that Mandarin was still her most proficient language although she asserted that English was her

preferred choice of language to use in most situations. She would speak to her friends in English especially if they did the same. She would choose English over other languages when speaking to other people she met. She would use English in MSN chats, switching to Mandarin only when her friends could not understand what she had written in English.

Like most of the other participants in this study, the variety of spoken English used by Limau depended on who her interlocutors were and their level of fluency. If SME was used, she would follow suit. Likewise, when using colloquial English. The need for conformity and acceptance influenced her subconscious decision to use the same variety as her interlocutors'. However, she mostly used CME constructs with the particle 'lah' whilst consciously reminding herself to use as much Standard English as possible.

6.3.4 Perception of and Attitude towards English

Limau's role models for improving her proficiency in English are friends who she considers as 'native speakers of English' because they speak English fluently and naturally, and are able to manipulate the language without worrying about making grammatical mistakes. She observes that these friends ''who are native English speakers seemed to be able to produce interesting and compelling stories through both writing and speaking'' and that they also obtain good academic results not only in the English language subject but also in other subjects and in oral presentations. These whom she refers to as native speakers of English are actually Malaysians whose English is L1 and their dominant language.

Limau admires their confidence and ability to capture audience's attention with fluent and interesting presentations. In Limau's opinion, a good command of English is a major contributing factor to achieving good academic results. She also observes that this group of speakers frequently socialises with friends who communicate only in English and therefore tend to speak better English. She is therefore aware of her disadvantage because her circle of friends communicates mostly in Mandarin.

6.3.5 Limau's Blog

6.3.5.1 Her Blog and Blog Writing

As with many blog owners, Limau initially saw her blog as her own creation of a personal space for her in which to grouse and reflect. But as more of her friends knew of her blog, she began making it not only a space for self-expression but also one in which to share her life with her readers. The design of her blog is an important criterion to her and she tries to make it unique and appealing to her reader. This applies to the content too, and she tries to write something different each time, saying, "to make it appealing to my readers, I've always wanted something different from my posts". She is a blogger who writes with an audience in mind (Brake, 2009).

Limau still remembers the high feeling she had when writing her maiden post. She felt exhilarated with ideas that needed an outlet and so, finished composing her first entry within 10 minutes and posted it without proof-reading it. Thereafter, she updates her blog at least once a week in order not to disappoint her readers. Being a blog follower herself, Limau knows that readers want to read new posts which are fresh and up-to-date.

Information on her blog is therefore kept current, inclusive of photos on her blog. It can be safely concluded that Limau tries to be a blogger who plays by the rules of blogging (Blood, 2003).

However, the writer's block occasionally strikes her, as she admitted that "the right words and phrases are just not available in my mind to strike up the first sentence". To circumvent the problem of not knowing what to write when it is time to blog, she devised a method of writing down keywords in a notebook to describe events she thinks are blog-worthy, explaining that "it somehow made me able to imagine the situation and environment once again". This revelation enforces the point that Limau is a blogger who is conscious of an audience for her blog (Brake, 2009). Like Camin, she keeps her entries short, believing that too many words can kill readers' interest and sometimes posts just a one-line text and a picture. The entries she wrote were not always about her but mundane issues called 'randomness' by bloggers when she did not have a clue on what to write.

In her third year of blogging at the time of the interview, and having posted more than sixty entries, Limau admits that she now writes with more ease and has a larger word bank readily available in her mind. Reflecting on her blog writing, she realises she no longer edits her writing, saying "not much of amendments while writing a post now. And now I can quite easily produce longer post as words will just flow through my head while blogging". Although she did not start a blog to improve her writing, it can

be said that blogging has helped her write more easily and with more confidence.

6.3.5.2 The Role of her Blog

Limau often used her blog to express grievances and frustrations faced in life, and to express gratitude for happy occasions. It was an outlet to make her life more manageable, as she said, "it does make my life a little happier and optimistic". Although she seeks solutions to problems through face-to-face discussions, she also blogs about them especially if they are issues she does not want to discuss with anyone directly. In her post entitled "Plz stop it" dated 25th Jan 2007, she blogged about her frustration in having to make an important decision regarding her choice of studies. In the interview, she said that "the fuss was like a huge stone in my heart pressing so hard that needed to be taken off by throwing it all out immediately". An untiring listening ear which could take a hard beating, her blog was the perfect choice for her to vent her frustration. It was also a way for her to get feedback from people with no vested interest in her problems.

Although Limau blogged with an audience in mind, it was a perceived audience as her blog did not have a strong audience. She believed the relatively few comments her entries received was an indication of non-interest in her blog but she was not perturbed by it as her blog was a space for self-expression. Those who followed her blog commonly interacted with her through the *chatbox* function although they did not leave

comments. In fact, Limau checked her *chatbox* for updates before looking at her [12]'feedjits' whenever she logged into her blog.

6.3.5.3 Language in Blogging

Limau does not consider blogging as a way to improve her writing skills, seeing it more as a space to express her thoughts about her life. She also does not use CME in her blog and perceives bloggers who do so as those who do not take English seriously and who use CME only to please their readers or *commentors*. This is partly true, as an examination of some Malaysian blogs shows that most of the CME features are found in the comment section rather than in the entries themselves, such as in Ocean's blog. It suggests that when the bloggers are interacting with their readers in the interactive comment section, they match the varieties used by their *commentors* for acceptance and bonding.

Although Limau claims that she does not use CME in writing her entries, they do show evidence of awkward English phrases which were translated from Mandarin. Bearing in mind her Chinese language background, it is not unusual to find this strategy being used. In her 17th Feb 2009 post, she wrote:

> To my great delight, my dad has this Nikon D70 digital camera – his precious actually – for me snapping photos but on one condition that is not taking it out of the house doorstep. It's quite

[12] *Feedjits* are live blog statistics or blog traffic feeds. FEEDJIT™ (http://feedjit.com) makes the Live Traffic Feed and other real-time widgets used by hundreds of thousands of blogs and websites world-wide, and allow blog owners and readers know which part of the world the readers who visit the blog are from.

> understandable of him to legislate such condition actually if you knew me well enough like he does (Limau's blog, 17th Feb 2009).

'House doorstep', a direct translation from Mandarin, is generally used as warning against setting foot out of the house. It does suggest the cognitive strategy of thinking in a dominant language before importing the previous knowledge of a source language into the target language; a very common strategy employed by L2 users (Selinker, 1972).

Limau explains that she tries not to translate from her dominant language while blogging but the inconsistent control over use of words in her blog writing shows problems fairly common among L2 learners of English. On the one hand, she was able to write that she "wanted a space for reminiscences and complaints" and that something she did "was naive and inane", but on the other, she expressed difficulty with collocations and word class, writing that her "exams were unspeechable" (14th Nov 2008), and in one email interview, she wrote that she "will try not to stale my blog" and that every time she visited a blog, she expected "a very new post and catchup".

To sum up Limau's story, although Mandarin is her dominant language, English is her preferred choice of language to use even though it is not her most proficient language. Her love for reading was triggered by J. K. Rowling's Harry Potter series. Like Ezdude, Limau attributed her repertoire of English words and better command of English to her appetite for reading which provided wide exposure to English. Her blog was used as an outlet for venting her frustrations and problems in life but few comments

limited her opportunities to engage in communication with her readers. Her blog has largely remained as a personal modern diary; a space for self-expression.

6.4 Ocean's Story

6.4.1 Introduction to Ocean

Ocean was a 21-year-old undergraduate in Electronic Engineering at a Malaysian university when he was interviewed in 2009. He lives in a suburban area where the community speaks Hokkien. His favourite pastime is to surf the Internet for any information on technological advancements and phenomena that intrigue him. His surfing activities provide him with lots of reading materials in English.

6.4.2 History of Language Learning

Ocean's heritage language is Teochew, his first language which he used only with his grandparents who lived with him when he was young. However, after his grandparents passed away, his knowledge of it deteriorated through disuse. Although his father spoke Teochew and his mother spoke Hokkien, they only communicated with him in their ethnic language, Mandarin, and this was Ocean's most proficient language.

Ocean picked up Hokkien from the community he grew up in where it was used as a lingua franca. English was first introduced to him at the church-run kindergarten he attended at three years old. However, he did not learn much English until his primary education at a Chinese school where Malay

and English were taught as language subjects. His use of these two languages was limited to language classroom use because the MoI and the language for communication at primary school was Mandarin.

Besides the aforementioned languages, Ocean also picked up Cantonese after starting work at a Cantonese-speaking company while awaiting university admission. Through 'immersion' at his workplace where most of the non-English-speaking staff with minimum knowledge of Mandarin spoke Cantonese, Ocean was forced to activate his limited knowledge of Cantonese, believing that "for languages ... you need to train every day, every day, every day". His much improved Cantonese within the five months there enabled him to make simple requests in Cantonese, such as ordering food and conducting basic conversations in Cantonese, but Mandarin remained his dominant language. His language usage with his interactants at work is depicted in Figure 6.2. The thickness of the arrows depicts the level of proficiency of the language used. The thicker it is, the more proficient the user is in that language.

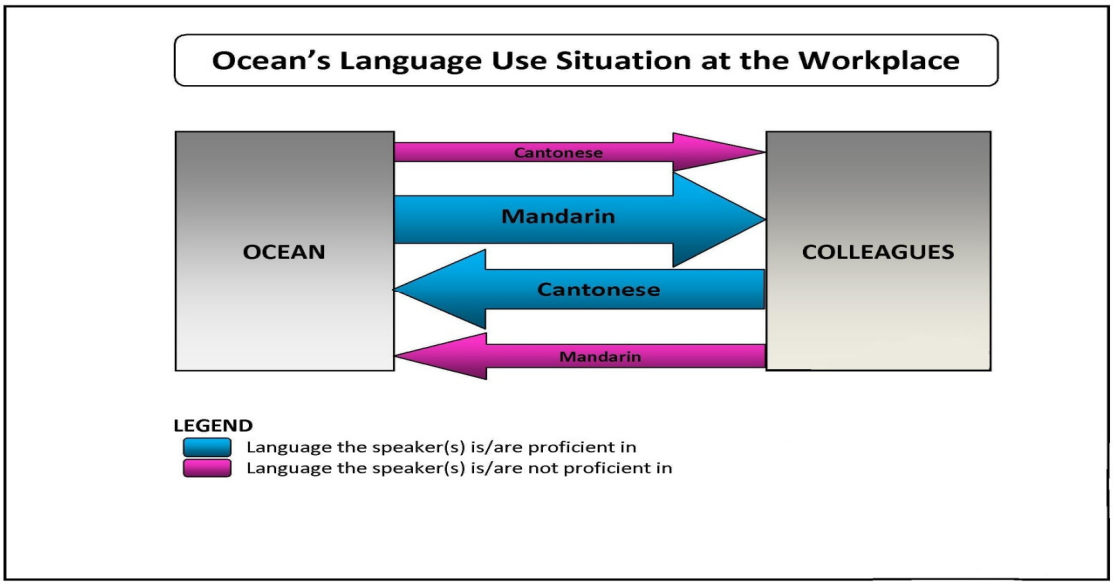


Figure 6.2: Ocean's Language Use Situation in the Workplace

Ocean's languages were learnt in this order; Teochew, Mandarin, Hokkien, English, Malay, and Cantonese, with Mandarin being his most proficient language. Although he stated that English was his choice of language to use because he wanted to improve his command of English, in reality, he seemed to use more Mandarin as it was his home language and social language with friends, although it was not purely Mandarin but a mix of Mandarin, Hokkien and English. While undergoing college education, Ocean did use more English than Mandarin, and this is further elaborated in the next section.

6.4.3 Language Use Experiences

Ocean did not encounter many language problems while growing up as he spoke the languages which were used around him. However, he started encountering communication problems with peers at secondary school where the MoI was in Malay. English and Mandarin were only taught as

language subjects. The students in this secondary school were filtered in from various Chinese primary schools, some which placed more emphasis on learning English, such as Cucumber's school. This resulted in two clear categories: Mandarin-speaking Chinese students who could converse fluently in English and who preferred to use English, and those who preferred to use Mandarin because they could not communicate well in English. The English-speaking Chinese group was also better in English because they spoke English at home and from a young age although they were educated in Chinese primary schools. The Mandarin-speaking Chinese students like Ocean, who could not communicate well in English, felt alienated when they could not participate in conversations with their English-speaking counterparts.

Though both Ocean's and Cucumber's primary education were similar, i.e. Chinese school where the MoI was in Mandarin, their use of English differed in that English was encouraged to be used outside of the language classroom in Cucumber's school while in Ocean's, it was not. The English-speaking pupils in Cucumber's school were happy to use English because it was seen as a symbol of prestige and those who were able to speak in English were rated highly among their Chinese-speaking peers. Moreover, Cucumber and his friends from school used to compete with one another to obtain the best results for English language. Hence, awareness of, and interest in English was high and there was a positive motivation to learn and use the language.

Ocean remembers this group of English-speaking Chinese with envy; how they excel in public-speaking competitions, win prizes for essay writing competitions, and take part in international competitions conducted in English. He rued the loss of such opportunities because of his poor command of English and remembered how he realised the importance of improving his English, saying "I realize that after we come out to the society,... I don't think they speak in Malay for their business or whatever, surely they speak English. I think if I didn't grab the chance, grab the opportunity to learn, to strengthen my English, I think it's very dangerous for my future". While Ocean was relating this to the researcher, his non-verbal behaviour clearly portrayed his regret over these lost opportunities.

Ocean also related a few other incidents which strengthened his resolve to improve his English. One was a Newspaper in Education (NIE) project where secondary school students were required to put together a mock newspaper. Their tasks included obtaining news materials and photographs, typing out the information as newspaper articles, doing the layout and printing the mock newspaper. It was a humbling experience for Ocean as he was relegated to what he felt were lesser important tasks because of his inability to construct grammatically correct sentences in English. The more serious work was left to the 'experts' - the students who spoke fluent English. He said, "I was like, I was like losing you know, compared to others. I need to catch, need to catch up".

He also related a second incident which he remembered clearly. He was a teenager at a restaurant with some friends and decided to order a 'superior-sized' drink, which he mispronounced as '*super-ree-or*'. His friends burst into such laughter that the waiter joined in, causing him much embarrassment. In the third incident he related, Ocean again remembered with embarrassment how he spoke haltingly and with much diffidence while consulting a college counsellor on his choice of education. He used what he described as 'broken English', devoid of the standard language forms and wrong use of vocabulary. He knew his sentences were ungrammatical and that they were incorrect. He said, "at first I was thinking in Chinese, in Mandarin. That's why make the sentence quite weird. It's like ... literally you translate into English".

Ocean was able to remember the incidents with such detail because they had a great impact on him. He was humbled and embarrassed by his language deficiency and started looking for more opportunities to use English. Watching American shows such as *Prison Break* and *Heroes* gave him plenty of opportunities to mimic how they spoke. He learnt to say "get out of here" instead of 'go out', which would have been correct in Mandarin when asking someone to 'get lost'. He was also intrigued by their pronunciation of English words, such as saying 'lil' for the word 'little' and wanted to be able to say it naturally. The difficulties he had experienced made Ocean more aware of his language learning journey.

It was while in college that Ocean made more progress. He came into contact with a large number of English-speaking Chinese who did not

know Mandarin. Ocean was forced to use English in order to communicate with them. He reported that his spoken English improved tremendously then and it was his college friends who had encouraged him to start blogging to further improve his English.

However, though they used English to communicate, the type of English they used in face-to-face informal conversations was not the standard variety but 'Malaysian broken English', badly constructed sentences that lack cohesion, infused with borrowed words from Chinese languages and self-coined words. In formal situations, they used more SME constructions.

The period of using more English ended after they graduated and his English-speaking college friends continued their education abroad. His present university peers preferred speaking in Mandarin and in this new environment, he began using Mandarin again for communication. Though he tried to switch it back to English, he and his university mates found it awkward to start conversing in English. This awkwardness was similar to Camin's when she tried conversing with her mother in English. Ocean also found it difficult to switch to English with his university mates because the closeness and friendliness they felt when using Mandarin was not there when they used English to communicate. Using Mandarin strengthened their bond.

At the time of the interview, which was when Ocean was an undergraduate, his use of English was limited. During class discussions, he and his friends would discuss in Mandarin although the subject they were discussing was

conducted in English. They would read the topic or the question in English, and then switch to Mandarin for the discussion. English was only used if other races were involved.

He felt that he needed to be in an encouraging and conducive environment where most of the people used English or where everyone else's English was better than his, to push him to use the language. Having a humble personality, he also felt that he would be perceived as showing off if he used English with interlocutors who did not use English. It was only through his blog where most of his interlocutors preferred using English that Ocean was able to practise his English. His blogging activities are discussed in a later section in this chapter.

6.4.4 Perception of and Attitude towards English

The Chinese are generally proud of their heritage. Especially among Chinese-educated Chinese, it is considered a disgrace if they do not know their own ethnic language or their cultural practices which are part of their heritage. It is not surprising that Ocean wants to retain his own cultural characteristics and knowledge of his Chinese culture and language even as he is aware of the importance of mastering English. In the interview, Ocean says, "I think we need to retain the traditional culture that we have ... so we don't ... copy to embrace other culture, adopt other culture to our culture, then we lose our uniqueness".

When his friend read his blog entry entitled 'The Top 10 Most Spoken Languages in the World' (15 Mar 2009) and communicated his dismay that

English was used internationally instead of the Chinese language, Ocean replied that "one day with me on the earth, English would never overide Chinese". Expressing the view that he would never forget knowledge of his ethnic language even though he was acutely aware of the importance of English for progress and development, he revealed his perception of language as an identity marker and of his concern of not letting his knowledge of English overshadow the Chinese in him. Therefore, Ocean sees English as a tool for communication and a step to a better future. Learning more than that or embracing the culture would probably be perceived as a threat to his Chinese identity.

Being Chinese educated, Ocean's concept of being a Chinese and upholding his Chinese identity and values is very strong. Having met Ocean twice for a long interview and a subsequent long discussion, and having followed his blog which chronicled his life, it can be concluded that Ocean practises four main virtues advocated by the Chinese culture; loyalty, filial piety, courtesy, and righteousness (Xu, 1995). One example of how this could have had an impact on his learning and use of English is when he felt that using good English in informal communication with his interlocutors was seen as being arrogant or boastful. It led to him intentionally using more 'broken' English in informal conversations in an effort to be courteous to his interactors.

On the other hand, the English-educated Chinese in this study seem to be more receptive to learning not only the English language but also its culture, and they do not see it as a threat to their Chinese identity (see

Ezdude & EC). They are also seen to have had a better academic advantage over those who did not learn English from a young age because academic reading materials are usually available in English. As expressed by Ocean during the interview:

> They learn it since young. When I was young my father never teach me English. Grow up just like that. When grew up, wah, their English very good but us so lousy. So we need to catch up, catch up but that time too late already.

While a part of Ocean wished to be as fluent as his English-speaking friends, another part of him was fearful of losing his Chinese identity in the process. All these influenced the language of his blog writing, as discussed in the following section.

6.4.5 Ocean's Blog

6.4.5.1 His Blog and Privacy Issues

Ocean sees his blog as a diary of his life. However, he is cautious about revealing too much of his deepest feelings. He does not blog about matters that are too private in nature even when using a less understood language than English. As he says, "I am scared to expose my own identity, my own things. That's why I don't dare to write those things." There is an awareness of random readers he does not know reading his blog.

6.4.5.2 Ocean's Blog Writing: His Entries

Ocean started his blog to improve his English. He explained in the interview that:

> my purpose in blogging is only to improve my English. Because my writing is very bad ... whenever I learn new word I jot down ... in my notebook, when I'm blogging I try to use the new word.

He realised that blogging was his only opportunity to use newly-acquired words as his undergraduate courses did not require him to write much text. His academic assignments were often in the form of short reports using scientific terms or calculations. He had also stopped using new words in oral interactions because having to search for the right words to say impeded his speech. As he said in the interview,

> My blog is actually a place for me to ... improve my English. Because ... Mandarin I can use it whatever place I can use. But English I don't think ... that much place I can ... you know, actually write ... write it in English. Those ... only few places I can use, I can I can write in English is like forum and blog only.

Nonetheless, he was also aware that his blog writing was not in flawless English and welcomed his friends' criticism of his writing as opportunities to learn. The English he used in his *Blogger* blog was significantly different from the one he used in his *Friendster* blog which was started much earlier for fun and where he used "very broken English". In his *Blogger* blog, he attempted to use more SME in his entries. Impressed by his college friends' blogs which he described as

> in very proper English, and the phrases they use are really beautiful, you know. They can ... decorate it ... very nicely ... you can get their emotion, you know ... it's very impressive la, so I want to make it my blog also ... all in proper language,

he took the effort to edit his entries before and after posting if he detected any mistakes. He also blogged more actively in his new blog, and in return, his entries received on average 13 comments from his readers.

Whenever Ocean posted entries in Chinese, they were mostly more personal in nature where he expressed his innermost feelings. He was afraid that it might be misrepresented if he used his limited vocabulary in English to express his thoughts. Entries which he posted in English were not as personal although they too, were writings about his life. When queried about his entry on 8th August 2008 which was written in Mandarin, he said:

> I don't know how to explain in English ... I feel more comfortable to write in Mandarin ... because in Mandarin, I can actually express it better ... I can do it faster too.

He also blogged in Mandarin when the occasion or the contents of the particular entry reflected its suitability, for example, his entry entitled "080808" (8th Aug 2008). Although it began with an introductory paragraph in English, that read, "Today is a MUST blog day because today only appear once in 1 thousand years. Today would be in Chinese", the content was written almost entirely in Mandarin (n=99.62%) because of the auspicious number which symbolised prosperity for the Chinese people.

Ocean's blog writing demonstrated that the choice of variety or of language in his blog was not a random act but a calculated one, designed for maximum impact to achieve the desired results.

6.4.5.3 Ocean's Blog Writing: the Comment Section

The variety, tone, and usage of English in Ocean's entries differed from the ones in the comment section of his blog. His blog entries had been written either entirely in Standard English, entirely in Mandarin, or in English with a mix of a phrase or two from other languages. However, in the comment section, the variety was intentionally non-standard English in mixed English, Mandarin, Hokkien, Cantonese, and Malay.

The comment section was where Ocean interacted with friends in Malaysia and also those who had left for further studies abroad. Though such a mixed variety of languages was used, the messages were generally understood because the regular interlocutors were all Malaysian Chinese, with occasional foreign readers who posted comments using more Standard English. Anyone reading the exchanges would be able to sense the relaxed tone, the informality, the camaraderie and friendliness created by the use of such a mix of languages. The liberal use of name-calling in the different languages also contributed to the relaxed atmosphere. Ocean explained that "for comments part only ... we do it like that ... we want to make it like we're closer to each other". By using these strategies, Ocean and his friends were replicating their usual face-to-face college-time interactions.

Non-standard contracted forms were also used for convenience as he and his *commentors* did not have to mind their language. Ocean asserted that it was for expediency and it did not in any way reflect his proficiency in English. He strongly believed that had SME been used here, it would have

given others the impression of the user trying to exert superiority in the language, and would have caused a distancing between him and his friends. Instead, reciprocating in the same variety would signify friendship and acceptance, which is why the register, style and linguistic features he used in his blog entries are different from those in the section where interactions with his *commentors* take place (see Section 3.2.2).

Ocean's "080808" entry on 8th August, 2008 received 31 comments which were written in a mix of English, Mandarin, Cantonese, Hokkien, Malay, and Japanese languages. Some of the comments are reproduced here to depict the friendly and relaxed atmosphere created by the choice of languages used. The *commentor* is identified by the format *name+said…* All names are pseudonyms to protect the identity of the *commentors*. In the reproduction, translations or explanations of non-English words are marked in square brackets to assist in understanding the comment:

mayz said... dun perasaan laa... jia jia praising urself handsome huh.. lolz and u very pannai leh, wat is d meaning for **天将降大任于斯人，必先苦其心志，劳其筋骨，饿其体肤，空乏其身。**huh? i think i learnt b4 but return to teacher edi. XD
Perasaan – [Source: misspelt Malay - *narcissistic/self-absorbed*] jia jia - [source: Romanised Mandarin - *pretending*] pannai - [Source: non-standard Malay spelling - *clever*] Chinese phrase - [Source: Chinese saying - *If God is to bestow a great task on you, He will make you go through all sorts of mental and physical sufferings first*]
In Standard English: "You are so narcissistic! Pretending to praise yourself by saying you are handsome. But wow, you're very clever in writing in Chinese. What is the meaning of the Chinese phrase? I think I've learnt it before but I've already forgotten all the Chinese that I've learnt (laughs)."

Figure 6.3: Sample comment 1

When translated into SE, the comment in Figure 6.3 conveys a more reproachful atmosphere than its playful and succinct version in CME. Mayz used just one word in Malay to aptly describe Ocean's lengthy post about himself. *Perasaan*, a misspelling of *perasan*, carries more than the meaning of self-importance. It refers to a person who unashamedly thinks highly of himself, either in his looks or his abilities. To comment that a person is *perasan* is a reproach, but when it appears in an informal register together with other non-standard features of writing and in mixed languages, the degree of the severity is reduced. mayz was merely teasing Ocean for complimenting on his own looks and at the same time, praising him for his ability to quote in Mandarin. The non-standard orthography (such as *dun*, *urself*, *u*, *wat*, *d*), non-standard abbreviation of words and phrase (*b4*, *edi*, *lolz*), non-standard structure (*u very*), non-English particles (*laa*, *leh*), and the use of a text-based emoticon (*XD*) in the comment contributed to the light atmosphere, making it impossible to misconstrue the remark as a criticism.

Ocean's replies to the comments were also informal and written in mixed languages. Figure 6.4 shows an extract of a posted reply to six comments made. To mayz, he wrote in the non-standard Malay commonly used by older Chinese generation who picked up Malay informally. Interestingly, this is also the variety used by some Malays when speaking to older Chinese who cannot speak in Standard Malay, in an effort to close the social and language gap. One clear indication of such a register is the use of the word *lu*, a Hokkien word referring to 'you'. 'then' is used as an

extension of meaning for 'what then', and the mixed languages is used in his reply to mayz in Malay to indicate teasing.

tc said...

mayz: lu bukan penjaga zoo then buat apa dalam zoo??

yy : haha.. funny le.. i tot u wanna said tired.. mana tau is the translation for first sentence.. LOL.. oi.. who said ugly.. u saw kee fei new look onot?? damn leng zai ..

zacway : apa lah budak ni.. u also remember that paragraph only..

lu - [source: Hokkien – you]
bukan penjaga zoo – [source: Malay - not the keeper]
buat apa dalam - [source: Malay - *what are you doing in*]

le - [source: Hokkien – particle]
mana tau - [source: Malay – instead]
leng zai - [source: Cantonese – handsome]

apa lah budak ni - [source: Malay - *what lah, this fella*]

Figure 6.4: Sample comment 2

As is evident from the excerpts above, Ocean and his friends banter in mixed languages within the comment section of his blog. Ocean believes that most youths in Malaysia speak in this manner amongst their peers and that it is an unavoidable phenomenon on the Internet because of expediency.

The light-hearted name-calling which is liberally used this section is also an indication of the light-veined comments. Such name-calling elsewhere would have resulted in an exchange of blows, for example *hamsap* (Cantonese: lecherous) which appeared 21 times in the sample. Ocean explained that in other interactive contexts such as in face-to-face interactions and text messaging, this was also the manner in which they interacted. Maintaining the same manner in their written interactive

discourse in his blog recreates and retains the closeness he has with his friends.

Surprisingly however, addressing each other using slang words in English was viewed as rudeness, something which Ocean did not want in his blog. Although coarse language in English seems to mark many young Malaysians' blogs, very little was found in Ocean's blog and in those which were examined in this study. Perhaps, being tertiary level students, they were more mindful of their language. This 'clean' image is what Ocean wanted for his blog and to provide his readers with a 'clean' environment in which to interact. When occasional F-words were used in his blog, asterisks were used to replace the letters to minimise the impact of the swear words. On some rare occasions when his *commentors* used strong language, Ocean issued a warning as he did not want his readers to see offensive language in his blog.

6.4.5.4 The Issue of Language and Identity in his Blog

Although Ocean and his friends blog mostly in English, their pride in their ethnicity is evident in his blog entries and blog communication with them. Besides his 8th August 2008 entry which was written in Mandarin, he also wrote that ethnic Chinese has the responsibility of being well-rooted in Chinese and of having some knowledge of Chinese culture. He insinuated that [13]ABCs should go back to their roots, or at the very least, be able to

[13] American-born Chinese (ABC) who are often perceived as Chinese who are not in touch with their ethnic background and culture. They are therefore not expected to be able to read or write in the Chinese language.

write their own names in Chinese. Knowing one's own ethnic language was seen as a mark of one's affiliation to or membership of one's ethnic group.

Even their rejection of English slang words reflected their commitment to their heritage. In Ocean's maiden entry on his *Blogger* blog, he had written, "Dude, i would like take some time to do some research about it before shift my blog here. Your patience is highly appreciated. Thank you." (20th Apr 2008). The word 'dude' prompted a retort from one of his friends who wrote, "can you not call us dude? i beh song *[source: Hokkien - annoyed]* adi" and who further elaborated that the "translation for dude = sozai *[source: Cantonese – silly fella]* = a word that is quite significant in my life!". That reproach was enough to stop him ever using the word 'dude' again in his blog. Ocean also revealed that he deleted the word 'bro' from his blog after another of his friends commented that he hated being called a 'bro'. Slang terms of endearment in English had offensive connotations for them but not derogatory name-calling in Chinese. Besides showing their reception of English slang words, these incidences also revealed Ocean as a blogger who considers his readers' feelings when blogging.

6.4.5.5 The Impact of Blogging on Ocean's Use of English

Ocean believed that blogging has helped him improve his writing in English. Previously, he was not able to distinguish usage of the different tenses and had a poor grasp of English grammar. But after four years of blogging, he was able to sense when the sentence did not sound right and able to select the right tense to use although he knew there was still room for improvement. Blog writing allowed him to take his time to construct

sentences and edit as necessary, and that helped him to self-correct his writing.

In oral interactions, however, Ocean still used 'broken' ME as taking the time to carefully construct his sentences before uttering would impede the conversation. He admitted that it was also done out of habit in informal settings with friends. When meeting new people, however, Ocean made an effort to use SME depending on the subject at hand and the variety used by the interlocutors. Like Ezdude, he felt that using SME with those who did not would be perceived as an attempt to flaunt his better command of the language, saying that "if they are Chinese speakers, then it'll be more comfortable to speak in Chinese. Speaking in English is like ... showing off" and further reiterated that because "we can speak Chinese what ... it's not necessary to speak in English, and Chinese we can understand more". In saying this, Ocean expressed that though he was keen to improve his command of English, he was only confident and comfortable using it with interlocutors who were like-minded and who would not view him negatively for choosing to communicate in SME. Acceptance was a key ingredient when using SME in informal settings.

6.4.6 Conclusion to Ocean's Story

Although at the time of the interview, Ocean was aware that his proficiency in English had deteriorated, he found it difficult to start using English with those he had been communicating with in Mandarin. The blogger who has a blog in English with the objective of improving his English, but who blogs in selective languages depending on the content and situation at

hand, had experienced different language exposure at different stages of his life. At the core of the languages or varieties of language he chose to use is the identity connection and social affinity. There is an unseen tension between wanting to use more and better English in order to improve his English proficiency and yet not perceive it as a betrayal of his ethnicity.

The language situations Ocean experienced thus far can best be described in Figure 6.5. Language situations that are coloured pink are those that he was not comfortable using because of a lack of proficiency in the language used in the environment but which were situations where he would have opportunities for practice. Light-blue ones are language environments he found favourable. From the figure, we can see that although Ocean desired to improve his English proficiency and took steps towards that, the pink-coloured situations reveal that it was not without an effort for him.

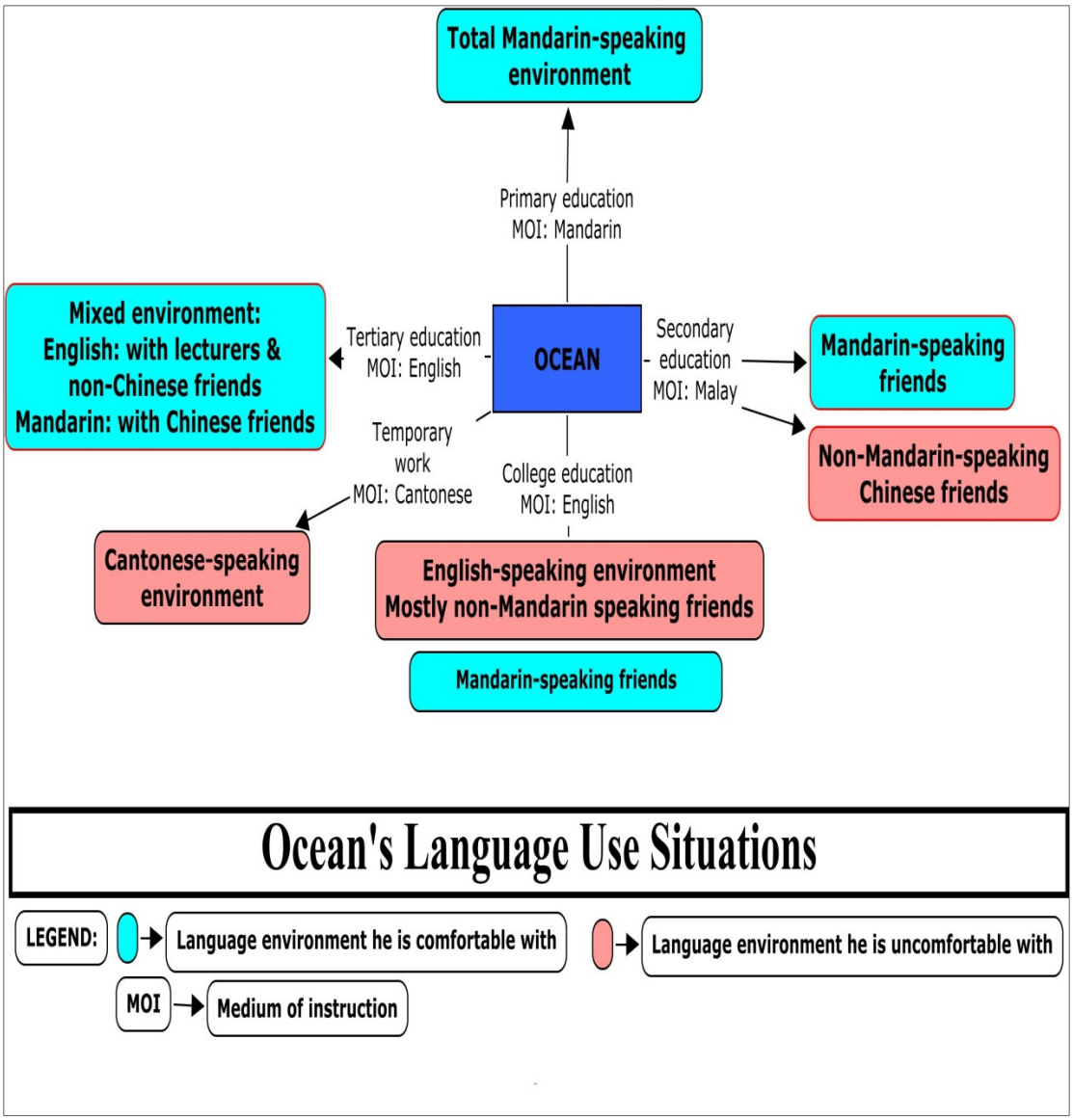


Figure 6.5: Ocean's Language Use Situations

6.5 Summary of Findings from the Qualitative Interviews

The stories of Ezdude, Camin, Limau, and Ocean together with references to the language exposure of Cucumber, Jeff, and EC help us understand their worlds as learners and users of English, and the language choices they made in their blogs. Without being immersed in the TL community, they learnt different varieties of English in their environments and

manipulated these in specific communicative situations and with individual interlocutors to achieve the effect they wanted out of their interactions. Their power to choose and adjust the varieties they used, moving along the continuum of the basilectal, mesolectal and acrolectal varieties of ME was only possible because they possessed these varieties in their repertoire and had tacit knowledge of which variety to use for what purpose. Their different language backgrounds and their perception of their identity as users of English played a large part in their attitude towards using it. Most of the interviewees were also aware of being judged by their use of SME and would use it only if their interlocutors followed suit.

It was also observed that those who were more concerned about and proud of their Chinese identity seemed to face more challenges in learning English. Whilst wanting to improve their proficiency in English and being able to speak good English, they were concerned that they would be perceived as having forgotten their Chinese roots. Subconsciously, they tended to use more of their ethnic language than English because of the fear of losing their ethnic identity. On the other hand, the interviewees who had a good command of both English and Chinese, and those who had learnt English as a first language, did not have such concerns. However, since only six participants were interviewed, this observation would need further research in a larger corpus of English-speaking Malaysian Chinese for it to be conclusive.

6.5.1 Awareness of the Different Categories of English Speakers

The interview participants were also aware of the different categories of speakers of English among them. They perceived there to be three distinct categories. The first category comprises Malaysians whose first language is English, who grew up in an environment conducive for learning and using English, and who are therefore proficient in English and use it as their dominant language. The interview participants also perceived these speakers as having more confidence in public speaking and in presentations, and as better achievers. These speakers are also expected to know intuitively the features of the grammar and able to manipulate them to produce creative and interesting language.

The second category comprises Malaysians whose first language is not English but having learnt English, use it as their dominant language in every day communication. They are therefore fluent speakers of English, like those in the first category.

The third category comprises Malaysians whose first language is not English and who do not use English as their dominant language. Although they do communicate in English when the need arises, they are usually not fluent speakers of English and have problems communicating in English.

However, where communication is concerned, the participants believe that what is more important is that the speakers are able to convey messages effectively regardless of which category of English speakers they belong to.

Figure 6.6 shows the participants' language background and their preferred choice of language. It also shows that those who had expressed their preference to use English but whose most proficient language is not English did not in reality use English as their dominant language. By their own account, they had expressed their desire to improve their command of English and knew that in order to do so, they had to be constantly communicating in that language. However, this desire was more difficult to achieve in practice.

The Position of English in their lives	Cucumber	Ezdude	Limau	Camin	Jeff	EC	Ocean
Their birth language	**English** & Mandarin	**English**	Mandarin	Cantonese	Hakka	Mandarin	Teochew
Other languages learnt (sufficient for use in conversations)	Malay, Hokkien, Cantonese	Malay	Cantonese, **English**, Malay	**English**, Malay, Mandarin, Korean	**English**, Malay, Mandarin, Hokkien, Cantonese	Hokkien, **English**, Malay, Cantonese	Mandarin, Hokkien, **English**, Malay, Cantonese
Main language for communication	**English**	**English**	Mandarin	Cantonese	**English**	**English**	Mandarin
Most proficient language	**English**	**English**	Mandarin	Cantonese	**English**	**English**	Mandarin
Most preferred-to-use language	**English**	**English**	**English**	Cantonese	**English**	**English**	**English**

Figure 6.6: Position of the English Language in the Lives of the Participants

6.5.2 Cultural Identity in the Use of Language

As discussed in the respective sections in this chapter, most of the participants had strong views about retaining their cultural identity while learning the language of an alien culture. However, they were divided

over the necessity of learning the cultural component when learning the language of a particular culture. Those who felt that it was not necessary were afraid that their cultural identity would diminish.

Those who were not fearful of learning about the English culture seem to be more proficient in English. EC, who was of the latter, believed that adopting positive practices from other cultures would not compromise one's ethnic and cultural identity, arguing that it made him value his Chinese heritage even more. He said,

> I'm always very cautious about my heritage, you know. I have to keep it, you know. Although the world is moving on, but heritage is always something that cannot be replaced. If you lost it, you lost it forever. You have to keep it for the generations to come. I think it's very important…

He further elaborated: "I think heritage is very important to somebody, you know, the identity of yourself. Like, I'm always proud of myself that I am able to use chopstick properly, you know, to eat, being able to [use it when] going back in Chinese New Year …", which conveys his opinion that the mark of a Chinese is his or her ability to participate in practices that are considered culturally Chinese.

The ability to speak in Mandarin was also perceived as an identity marker. When Camin expressed her relief at being able to speak a foreign language which she felt 'compensated' her inability to speak her ethnic language properly, she was in effect expressing her perception that a Chinese should be able to speak his or her ethnic language well.

Cucumber, on the other hand, did not attach any cultural sentiments to the learning and use of languages. An L1 speaker who had learnt both English and Mandarin from birth and proficient in both languages, he regarded languages as a means to an end. He said, "after I left primary school, the use of Chinese was… no longer essential … it was no longer required for me to read… to use Chinese" and "I stopped reading Mandarin after I left primary school". Although he continued using Mandarin with those he usually used Mandarin with and when it was needed, it was not because he needed to prove his Chinese identity. In the reconstruction of his narratives, he opined that it was considered prestigious to be fluent in English during his primary education because only a handful was able to converse in English. He revealed,

> And… the fact that in class, in primary school, there was always the excellence in English … because being in a Chinese school, being good at English was always a very… special thing. You know, it was like, within the class… of uhh… even the top 3 classes, … out of 40, only maybe 5 or 6 were good at English. So it was always a v- like a prestigious point you know …

Ezdude was the other L1 speaker who also did not seem to have issues with his Chinese identity although he spoke very little Mandarin. He said, "I do think in English, and I do dream in English, but I would not consider my lifestyle very English … rather, I'll consider myself … more … Malaysian lifestyle". Identifying himself as a Malaysian, Ezdude was not worried about being called a 'banana' as he was not brought up to attach cultural practices to his Chinese identity. He was also able to carry out his daily activities without the need to know Chinese languages. His identity as a

Chinese has perhaps never been called into question because most of his friends are English-speaking.

Limau and Jeff too, did not have any critical issues which challenge their Chinese identity as users of English, perhaps because they were proficient in both English and Mandarin. Although Jeff spoke mainly in English in primary school, he used more Mandarin in secondary school because of the social environment. Being exposed to English at a young age, he considered himself as a liberal Chinese, saying, "I think I'm more, sort of the more liberal type, so I think… But my parents are more like … they're Chinese-ed[educated]". Limau, on the other hand, considered herself as being more Chinese-like in terms of her way of life and thinking. Because she was Chinese-educated and used Mandarin as her dominant language, she did not face an identity crisis when using English.

Ocean, the main informant in this research, had strong identity issues when using English. Perceiving the ability to speak his heritage language as a mark of his Chinese identity, Ocean had difficulty using English with his Chinse-speaking Chinese friends. The use of the Mandarin language was seen as a device to strengthen social and ethnic ties whilst communicating in English was perceived to be 'colder' and devoid of emotional ties or relationship. He said, "If I talk to my friend that I know very long then it feel very odd to talk in English. If I talk in Mandarin, it's more like, more friendlier". However, while he had high expectations of himself as a Chinese, he had a softer stance towards people who did not know their own ethnic language, seeing it more as a disadvantage for them. Where

English language was concerned, he learnt it simply for practical reasons, "for communicate purpose, for future purpose, for you know to get a better future", he said. Although he envied friends who were fluent in English, he was careful to assert that it was only the language that he embraced, nothing more than that. As though afraid that learning more than just the language would 'dilute' the Chinese in him, he said, "It's not really that I want to embrace the culture. If I compare it to other cultures, I would like to embrace other cultures more than the English culture". And like EC, he also feared that if the Chinese people did not cherish their culture, it would one day be eroded. He said,

> I think the Chinese got a lot of culture also, but they don't really like ... protect it. That's why I think we need to retain the traditional culture that we have. So we don't like, copy other things lah, copy to embrace other culture, adopt other culture to our culture, then we lost our unique.

In conclusion, it appears that participants who were Chinese educated at an early age and whose ethnic language was more dominant than the English language, had strong views about their Chinese identity as users of English. They also seem to have a 'closed' view about the English culture. It could be that strong cultural ties to their ethnicity were forged during their learning of Mandarin at a young age, making them less receptive of cultures other than their own. Though there is little in this research to prove this, the thought that this 'closed' view towards English might perhaps be a hindrance to them achieving a higher proficiency in English than they desired cannot be totally ignored. Although they were aware of the importance of English and desired to be fluent in English, there was a part

of them which resisted for fear of losing their Chinese identity and for fear of being labelled 'show-offs', thus resulting in them using the more culturally 'acceptable' varieties than the standard ones.

6.5.3 The participants' perception towards their use of the different varieties of ME

The participants' narratives about the varieties of English they used or chose to use in different situations reveal some useful insights into why English speakers who are able to speak English well choose to shift to a lower variety when communicating in informal situations.

To give an idea of where the Malaysian varieties of English are located among the three broad varieties of languages, SME which is the variety taught in school is the acrolectal variety (Stewart, 1965). CME is the mesolectal variety (Bickerton, 1973), and BME and its variations are equivalent to the basilectal variety (Stewart, 1965).

6.5.3.1 The More Formal Variety

The interviews with the participants revealed the different terms used for the varieties of ME and what those terms really meant to them. There was a general perception that Standard British English (SBE) is of a higher level than SME although the participants did not use these actual terms when discussing them. For example, Ezdude calls the SME variety "good English but not necessarily standard English, with a Malaysian flair".

When relating their stories, the participants referred to SME as 'good English', 'proper English', 'standard English', 'formal English' and

'beautiful English'. Ezdude calls SME 'proper English' which he used when conversing with his Singaporean college friends, who presumably used Singapore English, the standard variety used there as opposed to Singlish which is the colloquial variety. He said, "I tend to speak more proper English because they speak proper English ... But it's not because they speak proper English, but rather because I feel more comfortable speaking that way ... when I'm speaking with them". What Ezdude revealed was that the variety he used was dependent on the variety his interlocutors used with him in order for him to identify with his interlocutors.

Ezdude, however, did not use this 'proper English' with his Malaysian friends who "don't normally speak in proper English" unless it was during their religious gatherings where "they do speak proper English" but which was "not exactly very proper English but it's good English ... phrased in a proper way but with a bit more of a Malaysian flair". It is clear that Ezdude was conscious of another variety which was higher than the 'good English' he and the people around him used.

Ezdude also labelled SME as 'formal English' when he said, "I rarely use formal English when speaking with other people in person" and that when using the instant messaging application, "I'll tend to use better English" where "I choose to write in full sentences with proper grammar, correct grammar". Although he referred to SME as 'good', 'proper', 'formal', and 'better', he was also quick to say that the 'proper' variety he used was sometimes just a semblance of 'proper' English, confirming his awareness

of another variety which he perceived as a higher variety. The general perception among Malaysians is that the ME varieties do not have a standard form or are not good enough.

This is also the perception of Cucumber who used similar references when referring to SME and other standard varieties. He said,

> when I'm with my Chinese-educated friends, sometimes when they speak English, I am able to speak their… kind of English, in a sense. But then when I meet people, like you, I tend to speak better English.

'Their kind of English' refers to CME which Cucumber preferred to use with his Malaysian friends even though he was able to use SME. Having studied in Australia for a year, Cucumber said his time in Australia,

> brought properness to my English, having to speak proper English with the Australians, ... with less 'lah' and 'ler' and 'loh' and more use of proper-like sentences ... because they will not be so accustomed to our kind of English ... but that gave me the chance to practice proper speaking of English.

Wanting to successfully convey the message was Cucumber's reason for using a particular variety, especially one used by his interlocutors. When speaking about the language used in blogging, however, he did not think it necessary to use Standard English in order to be understood. He said, "Blogging was your own personal diary ... and the way I think about it is not important to have proper English in your diary" and "the audience to my blog were also people who did not expect beautiful English from my blog" and that "there were also people who blog in their own raw language." 'Raw language' refers to the mesolectal or basilectal varieties.

Although the blogging he referred to was for public consumption, he perceived it as a personal space where the owner could write in whatever variety he so pleased. Cucumber also perceived Australian English as 'proper English', the standard variety which, in his opinion, only native varieties of Standard English can lay claim to.

Ocean, who was Chinese-educated, appeared to revere SME, referring to it as the 'very proper English' used by his English-speaking friends in their blogs which inspired him to use ''proper, proper words to train up my own English''. This meant, amongst other things, not using unconventional spelling as a shortcut, such as using 'u' to represent 'you' or 'dun' for 'don't'. He also perceived BSE to be a complete and perfect variety which the ''westerner speaks in perfect sentences, very good perfect sentences and everything is in full word, full word, full word''. Conventional orthography was perceived to be an important feature of the standard variety. However, when Malaysians used incomplete sentences in informal conversations in English, Ocean believed this less than perfect style was used to induce a more relaxed and friendlier atmosphere than to create the misconception of trying to show-off when using a more standard variety. So although Ocean aspired to use SME, he was careful to use it only in the context when it would not produce a negative effect.

Jeff, another participant, was acceptant of CME in informal situations and even in class discussions but not in writing such as blogging as it would appear unprofessional, untidy and less interesting to read. Being more liberal and open-minded to the use of any varieties of English, Jeff did not

attribute the use of particular varieties to anything other than the formality or informality of the situation. However, he thinks the Malaysian variety consists only of CME and BME, and that SME is BSE, calling it the 'proper English' used by the English.

Camin, on the other hand, recognised the three main varieties of ME which she called the 'proper Malaysian English' (SME), Malaysian English (CME), and 'broken English' (BME). She defined 'proper Malaysian English' as the 'more serious English' which required time for her to construct and organise in her thoughts before using and the variety used in debates. This was the variety she used with her lecturers and people in authority, where she would construct her sentences carefully before speaking to avoid being criticised by her superiors for her language. She recognised the formality of the standard variety and instinctively knew with whom and when to use it, although she was aware her attempts were far from perfect.

Camin used 'Malaysian English' (or CME) with friends, identifying it as a variety which required less or no careful construction which they could use to "talk anything under the sun … straight from the mind". However, she still considered this variety to be 'proper English', albeit occasionally containing the particle *lah* which gave the conversation a less serious undertone. This is the variety which she used more often in her daily communication though she also used 'broken English'.

Limau generally used SME and CME, but consciously reminded herself not to use non-English particles in her sentences or colloquial sentence

structures (e.g. 'Where got?') even when using CME in oral conversations. English was perceived to be a more formal language which should be used 'properly' and not be infused with colloquial features. Limau also perceives the use of CME in blogs as being less serious and that blog owners used it to give their blog entries a friendlier look.

EC, who started a blog to write more in English, referred to SME as the 'formal type of English' and 'presentable English' which he used in his blog. However, he also admitted to writing his blog entries in a more relaxed way in English in order to attract readers, though he was not referring to using code-mixing or code-switching. EC felt that using the right style of writing in his blog entries would be more presentable and attractive than entries written in a lower variety of English.

However, EC made a concession when using spoken English. He code-switched in his conversations to create a more relaxed and fun atmosphere, especially when conversing with friends. His perception was that using some non-English words in a conversation in English can lighten the mood or diffuse tension, and not because of his Malaysian or Chinese identity. Neither did he think that using SME could induce a negative perception about the user.

6.5.3.2 The Less Formal Variety

The participants used various terms to refer to the less formal varieties of ME. The use of these terms also reveal their understanding of this variety which they perceived as a lower variety than the standard ones, less than formal and therefore only suitable for use among peers and in very

informal situations where accuracy and appropriateness were not expected. Yet, it seemed to be a variety they greatly enjoyed among their peers. They commonly referred to this variety as 'broken' (not whole), 'street' (a variety used by people in the streets), and *rojak* (consisting of elements from mixed languages).

Ezdude used 'street language' in face-to-face conversations with his friends in Malaysia. He perceived this colloquial variety to be one in which he could let his guard down when communicating with friends who were not used to the formal variety of English. Therefore, although he was conversant in SME, he felt that it would create an awkward situation to use SME with friends who could only converse in CME.

Cucumber called the basilectal variety of ME, *rojak* and revealed that his parents conversed with him in *rojak* English. It was a mix of Mandarin, English, Hokkien, and Malay languages because these were the common languages in their repertoire. The particular code chosen to deliver a particular concept or meaning was selected based on simplicity, expediency, and for depth of the meaning intended. Indeed, using *rojak* English does not require elaborate thought as the *rojak* conversation usually takes place smoothly, with the interlocutors using whichever word in a particular language that comes to mind first, knowing that whichever they use will be understood.

However, with his Malaysian Chinese friends, Cucumber used 'Malaysian English' which he meant to be CME in order to lower barriers and reduce

awkwardness, and to aid in understanding the conversation.

Camin, too, put *rojak* and *Manglish* at the same level as 'broken English' and defined it as mixed languages or a hotchpotch of words from different languages, where "when we don't know certain words, we'll change it from English to Malay or totally into Chinese …" She was also aware that what one group in Malaysia considered as 'normal ME' could be perceived by another group in Malaysia as 'not proper English'. For example, asking "Eh, where you wanna go?" and "That one ah?" were perceived as 'normal ME' but not 'broken English' among her friends because these were not mixed with content words from other languages. However, according to her, they were not 'proper English' by her lecturers' standard.

While Camin believed *Manglish* was a portmanteau of **Ma**lay and E**nglish** words and used it mainly with her Malay friends, Limau thought that it was a combination of **Man**darin and En**glish** languages and therefore most likely spoken by Malaysian Chinese. Describing *Manglish* as English language which contained words like *lah*, *bah*, or constructions with phrases such as 'can or not', she perceived it as a colloquial variety commonly used among her Malaysians friends. Both Camin and Limau are correct in their opinion of *Manglish* as it is but not one basilectal variety of spoken ME. For example, the *Manglish* spoken by Malaysian Malays from the state of Kelantan is different from the *Manglish* spoken by Malaysian Malays from the state of Kedah (see Zuraidah, 2000). They differ in many ways, including their morpho-syntactic structures and the types of mixed codes used.

Jeff was not sure what mixed codes he used in informal conversations, but felt safe using a less formal variety with friends where he would not be judged. He did not have a name for this less formal variety he used.

EC was much more aware of his usage of English. He described ME as being infused with multicultural elements and a variety which included words or succinct phrases that only Malaysians would understand. Nevertheless, these were mutually recognisable phrases such as saying 'no stock' to mean 'I'm afraid we're out of stock'.

EC used this variety with peers who did not have other varieties of English in their repertoire in order to reduce awkwardness or embarrassment and to communicate easily with them. Although he could easily switch to another common language, it depended on whether the majority of them were English-speaking or otherwise. EC also believed that Malaysians code-mixed because those words were loaded with cultural connotations which could not be adequately replaced by English words alone, such as wishing someone *Gong Xi Fa Cai* which is more than just a form of Chinese New Year greeting and conveyed a lot more than saying 'Happy New Year'. He also felt that in some particular contexts, the English equivalent would sound strange even though the conversation was in English.

Ocean also referred to the basilectal ME variety as 'Malaysian Broken English' which he used with his college peers to create a more relaxed and friendlier atmosphere. He said that using 'proper English' with them would create a strange feeling and make them wonder why.

In summing up, the different varieties of ME were used with the following perception and in the following manner:

Making a downward adjustment to suit the variety used by the other interlocutors was done to reduce uneasiness or awkwardness, for a convergent intention. It was done so that the other interlocutors would not experience discomfort because of their inability to use a higher variety and all interlocutors were of the same level.

Adjusting one's variety upwards to match the one used by the other interlocutors was not perceived as an attempt to foster a closer relationship or to reduce awkwardness, but to match the variety used by the interlocutors with the aim of showing one's capability of using the higher variety.

Adjusting one's variety upwards in a situation which did not require it was perceived as an attempt to flaunt ability. The use of this variety in such a situation is done with a divergent intention as the higher variety is perceived as a social weapon to show superiority when used among interlocutors using a lower variety.

The participants in this research appear to accept the need to adjust their variety downwards to match their interlocutors' variety, but did not expect their interlocutors to lower theirs to match the variety used by the participants. This suggests that they perceived the variety they were capable of using, to be of a higher variety. Being able to adjust their variety downwards was also a feel-good action, the opportunity to show

kindness to others who were not able to use a higher variety and not to appear as snobbish.

The different labels and description used to explain the Malaysian varieties of English from the participants' perspectives are presented in Figure 6.7. None of the participants used the term 'colloquial' and some of the same terms appear in different categories as perceived by them. While the participants understood the difference between the acrolectal and the mesolectal varieties, they were not as sure of the line between the mesolectal and the basilectal varieties of ME, assuming they were the same, i.e. there was one formal variety and one informal variety of ME.

Participants	Varieties of Malaysian English		
	Acrolectal ME (SME)	**Mesolectal ME (colloquial)**	**Basilectal ME**
EC	Formal type of English; Presentable English; Standard English.	A more relaxed way of writing in English; Malaysian English	Mixed
Ezdude	Good English but not necessarily standard English with a Malaysian flair; Proper English (Singapore); Not exactly very proper English but good English phrased in a proper way but with a bit more of a Malaysian flair; Formal English; Better English.	Street English	-
Cucumber	Better English; PROPER ENGLISH (more standard than SME).	Malaysian English	*Rojak*
Jeff	Proper English	Malaysian English; More Malaysian version	-
Ocean	Proper English; Very proper English; Good perfect sentences (more standard than SME).	-	Malaysian broken English; very broken English
Camin	Proper Malaysian English; Standard English; serious English; proper English.	Malaysian English; proper English to a certain extent; normal Malaysian English.	Broken English; *Rojak*; *Manglish*.
Limau	Standard English; Proper English.	Malaysian English; *Manglish*.	-

Figure 6.7: The Labels used by the Participants to Describe the ME Varieties

6.5.4 The Perception of the Malaysian English Varieties in their Blog Writing

Although the participants used both the formal and informal varieties of English in oral conversations, they were unanimous in their perception that only the formal variety should be used in writing their blog entries. Blog entries written in the informal varieties were perceived to be less appealing and presented a less professional look.

All the participants acknowledged that blogging had improved their written English. Since starting their blogs, they were more aware of how others would view their writing on such a public platform, being conscious of the words they were using and the construction of their sentences. Although only Ocean started his *Blogger* blog with the intention of improving his English, all the participants made this observation about their blog writing.

6.5.5 Other Observations and Findings from the Interviews

The interviews revealed other relevant information about the participants' use of English. Participants who had had to work hard to achieve the proficiency they have today seemed to be more aware of their language journey and were more observant of the languages that were used around them. For example, Ocean was able to relate with detailed clarity and ease about his language experiences during his primary and secondary education as though it had only just happened, likewise for Camin. The other participants who seemed to have learnt English effortlessly and were

able to speak it fluently had to think a lot harder in order to remember their language learning journeys. They were less aware of how they had acquired the language and of the languages they used in general. For example, it was with great effort that Jeff tried to remember the language his father used to communicate with his mother and even after thinking hard, he still was not so sure of the answer! Ezdude revealed that he was not able to share more about his language learning experiences because he did not put much thought into how he acquired the language. It could be possible that the more difficult one's journey is towards acquiring a language, the more unforgettable it is.

Based on the rich narratives provided by the participants, it can also be deduced that the push factor (the participants' awareness of the importance of English) was not sufficient to help them improve their proficiency of English. Rather, it was the conducive and encouraging environment such as peers who spoke the language which provided them with the stimulus to act and the opportunities for practice.

The participants also used other languages in their English blog for different reasons. Ocean would not blog in English when writing about matters pertaining to the heart. He was afraid that he would not accurately express his emotions and thoughts in the matter, subjecting it to possible wrong interpretation of the message he wanted to convey. Camin would blog in Korean for more privacy, believing that fewer people understood Korean. Although her writing was on a public platform, she wanted control over a degree of privacy she felt entitled to as a blog owner.

In the matter of revealing their real identity, the participants could be categorised into three groups; the declare-all (Ezdude, EC, and Jeff), the partially private (Cucumber, Ocean, and Limau), and the rather private (Camin). The pre-interview process (arrangements for interview) with the participants also showed the more cautious nature of the two female participants. Both were extremely reluctant to meet the interviewer for face-to-face interviews, but readily agreed to e-mail interviews when it was suggested.

However, Camin finally agreed to complete the rest of the interview face-to-face. After subjecting the researcher to a series of question to ascertain the authenticity of her identity, they finally met at a safe public location. The researcher also eventually met Limau at her home when the reconstruction of her narratives was ready to be shown to her. Personal safety seems to be the issue rather than shyness or privacy matters.

6.6 Summary of Chapter Six

This chapter has discussed the participants' perceptions of the ME varieties and the awareness of their choices when using English. It has also provided an understanding of the reasons behind their choices. It can be concluded that although the participants were aware of the perception of the 'lower' varieties of English used either in oral conversations or in writing, they did not perceive these varieties to be of lesser value or judge them negatively. They were, in fact, proud of their ability to use the varieties which identify them as Malaysians.

CHAPTER 7: DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS - BLOG DATA

7.0 Analysis of Blog Data

RQ3: How do they use English in their blogs?

This chapter presents the findings from the analysis of 28 entries and 219 comments received for these entries from one selected blog. Criteria for the selection of the blog from a total of six participants who were interviewed include the following:

- it must belong to participants who are current bloggers
- it must belong to participants who are accessible to the researcher for further follow up
- average number of comments received for the posts should be substantial, varied, and from a number of unique *commentors*

Using the criteria above, Ocean's blog was selected for analysis of data. From the time Ocean started writing his *Blogger* blog in April 2008, until the time his blog writing was analysed at the beginning of October 2009, Ocean had posted 64 entries in a span of 17 months, making it an average of 3-4 posts per month. The selected posts were picked from the first two months of his blogging, i.e. April and May 2008 (11 posts) – labelled in this research for ease of naming as the 1st period of writing; December 2008 and January 2009 (9 posts) – as the 2nd period of writing – after a space of 6 months; and August and September 2009 (8 posts) – as the 3rd period of writing – after another space of 6 months. This selection method was done

to determine if there were changes to the blog discourse after a period of time and what changes they were.

The 28 entries that were selected for analysis show Ocean's attempts at using semi-formal English in his writing, with some written in reported style or note form and some in verse style. A huge percentage of the entries were written in English (89.3%) and the rest in Mandarin (10.7%). Figure 7.1 shows the breakdown of the languages used in the entries along with the language in which the titles of the entries were written. The entries themselves were in a consistent language with very little code-mixing. The reasons for using specific languages were already expounded on in the earlier sections (See Sections 6.4.4. and 6.4.5).

The comments section of the blogposts was of a different *langscape* (language scenery) altogether (see Section 6.4.5.3). A mix of languages was used here, and it is these that are analysed to reveal the communication strategies employed by Ocean (also referred to as 'tc' in the comments section) and his *commentor* friends when interacting on this blogging platform. This is also the section of the blog where the traffic is most active because of the multiple-way communication taking place. The language tone and register are totally different from the ones in the blog entries. The number of entries written in the three periods and the number of comments received for these entries are also shown in Figure 7.1. Over two hundred comments were received in this period of time and analysis of these comments yielded rich data that help inform and complement the findings from the participants' narratives.

Ocean's blogposts	1st period (April & May 2008)	2nd period (Dec 2008 & Jan 2009)	3rd period (Aug & Sept 2009)	Total
Title & Content in English	10	7	6	23
Mandarin Title & English Content	1			1
Hokkien Title & English Content		1		1
Title & Content in Mandarin			1	1
English Title & Mandarin Content		1	1	2
No. of posts (Total: 28)	**11**	**9**	**8**	**28**
Comments to Ocean's blogposts	**1st period (April & May 2008)**	**2nd period (Dec 2008 & Jan 2009)**	**3rd period (Aug & Sept 2009)**	**Total**
No. of comments (Total: 219)	105 (39+66)	58 (10+48)	56 (28+28)	219

Figure 7.1: Details of the entries and comments in the three periods of Ocean's blog writing

The next section details features of the communication strategies used in the comments section of Ocean's blogposts. They show how the various strategies are executed to express the intended messages of the interlocutors.

7.1 Communication Strategies

Analysis of the comments section of Ocean's selected blogposts reveals that he and his blog interactants employed a variety of communication strategies (CSs) that show clever ways of using the language(s) they know in order to succinctly communicate rich information that encompasses not only the message but also ethnic and cultural data, and social information. These strategies include both lexical and syntactic strategies. Some of the CSs found in most online networking sites and online communication medium such as instant messaging, are also found in this space because of

the similarities in the mode of communication. In such CSs, the grammatical structures and rules of English grammar are usually inventively compromised without affecting the meanings of the messages that are conveyed. As brief examples, word class becomes less rigid with nouns morphed into verbs, adjectives or other word classes, non-content words such as auxiliary verbs are dropped from sentences, and sentences are short and command-like in structure (Crystal, 2001; Herring, 2002; Rami & Jihad, 2005). In many instances in the data, a few CSs are employed at the same time, creating overlapping of CSs. For example, in the corpus of the comments analysed, *commentor* ufriin said: "wei... ori a bit la.. haiz..." (Blog entry dated 4 May 2008). In this example, *wei* exhibits two CSs being used; absence of capitalization as the initial word in a sentence and non-English interjection as an attention getter. As such, *wei* is recorded under both categories of CSs. The CSs found in the corpus are discussed below.

7.1.1 Orthography

A high frequency of orthographic strategy was found in the corpus. Since there is no imposition of a word limit on comments posted in blogs, it is not the reason for using this strategy. Most *commentors* and bloggers employed this strategy in the comments section for ease of writing and speed, i.e. not having to press the shift key to change the letter case and using fewer keystrokes to get their message across. It is also used to create an atmosphere of informality to this space through the informal tone and register (see Section 6.4.5.3). This economy of effort and keystrokes also

gives rise to different and novel permutations of spellings, such as 'already', which is written as *d*, *dy*, *adi,* and *already* in the corpus and are easily understood through the context in which they appear. Orthographic sub-strategies that are found in the corpus include non-standard spelling, contractions, omission of punctuation, and absence of capitalization.

7.1.1.1 Non-standard Spelling

Simplified spelling produced in a variety of ways and resulting in non-standard spelling is found throughout the corpus. Though not accepted in formal writing, it is a creative strategy commonly found in CMC. Experienced users of this simplified writing find it fast and easy to write in this manner. However, not all non-standard spelling found in the corpus is a simplification strategy as sometimes more letters are used instead. In this case, the non-standard spelling is used in order to give the word a 'twist' or to make it sound 'slangy' and in order to emphasize the word.

Examination of the corpus yield the following ways in which the spelling is manipulated. Samples from the corpus are reproduced below and the word in discussion is indicated in bold while words that fit in the other non-standard spelling section are underlined instead of being reproduced in those sub-sections. Some words in the examples belong to more than one sub-category and this is identified through the word that is both underlined and in bold. Translations of the samples into Standard English are given in square brackets while explanations of certain words such as onomatopoeic words or non-English words are in parentheses. The six numbers in square brackets at the end of the sample refer to the date of the blog entry from

which the sample is taken (ddmmyy). xxx said… refers to the *commentor* who made the comment. tc said… means that it is a comment made by Ocean in the comments section of his blog while Ocean wrote… refers to a sample from his blog writing. Some of these features are not unique to ME.

Replacing a word with letter(s)

Some examples from the corpus that belong in this sub-category are *r* [are], *c* [see], *n* [and], *ok* [okay], *d* [the, already], *mayb* [maybe], *v* [we], and *b* [be], including the ones in Figure 7.2.:-

tc said… zacway: lol.. he said **u** both.. but din mention louie.. ahaha!! i really LOL.. [240408] *[(Laughs out loud) He mentioned both of you, but didn't mention louie (laughs). I am really laughing out loud.]*
ryl said… anyway.. **y** zacway **u** call yourself ghost? XD [250408] *[Anyway zacway, why did you call yourself a ghost? (laughs)]*

Figure 7.2: Replacing a word with letter(s)

Replacing a word with number(s)

Figure 7.3 displays samples from the corpus exhibiting the use of numbers to replace words:-

Ocean wrote… Rushed to Genting Highland in the other day. Only **2** of us taking Genting Shuttle. [240408] *[We rushed to Genting Highlands the other day. There were only two of us taking the Genting Shuttle service.]*
tc said… yea.. the first **1**.. [200408] *[Yes, you're the first one.]*

Figure 7.3: Replacing a word with number(s)

Replacing a word with a symbol

In Figure 7.4, asterisks are used to replace letters in an offensive word or strong language. This 'politeness convention' reveals the stand taken by this group of blogger-*commentors* with regards to vulgarity in blog communication, while other examples from the corpus that replace letters or words with symbols include *f*cking*, *??*, and *#23*.

ryl said…

translation for dude = sozai = a word that is quite significant in my life! [200408]

[The translation for dude is sozai (silly fella), a word that is a sore point of contention in my life!]

zacway said…

but how come my name got **fu**er** but kennway doesnt have de?! [240408]

- *[but why is the word 'fucker' attached to my name but not kennway's?]*

Figure 7.4: Replacing a word with a symbol

Replacing a word with letter-number combination and rebus

In Figure 7.3, tc replaced 'one' with the number 1 but not 'first', although in other instances, he replaces 'first' with a number, while in Figure 7.5, *commentor* Yy simplified 'first' by applying a date convention using the number 1, but did not simplify the word 'one'. This may suggest that non-standard spelling is used randomly or that even when using non-standard spelling, there is an effort to keep the message clear. Having two number 1s together requires more cognitive effort to decode, therefore, they seem to avoid doing that:-

Yy said…

huhu….pass by and yeah….am i the **1st** one? cool blog…. [200408]

[(laughs) Just passing by your blog, and yeah, am I the first one to post a comment? It's a cool blog (expressing positive sentiment)]

Figure 7.5a: Replacing a word with letter-number combination

Their inconsistency in using the strategy of replacing a word with a letter-number combination in the corpus is shown in Figure 7.5b. The word 'one' and 'first' is most commonly used in this strategy although one occasion of ***3x*** [three times] was also found:-

Ocean wrote... This is not a hasty decision however it's well-planned which I had the intention to leave this hectic yet dreadful place since the **first** month. Haha. [040508] Ocean wrote... yl said, in order to get a new love one must forget and forgo their **1st** love(should be the previous love huh??). Thus, jy, jiang, yl, and kway, please forget and forgo your **1st** love!! [230109]
tc said... Yy : o.. is like that la.. now i und y must **1st** love d.. ya.. mayday's lyrics.. haha.. [230109] tc said... cc n techkie : no energy.. =.=" **first** day ady spent 14 hours sleeping.. [250109]
ufriin said... **1st** marriage 2013, 2nd marriage 2016, 3rd marriage 2019, 4th marriage 2020, 5th marriage 2021. [281208]
Yy said... U know **1st** impression psychology? Something u like at very **1st** will always be ur favorite. those denying are lying, LoL... [230109]

Figure 7.5b: Inconsistent replacement of words with letter-number combinations

A strategy which is similar to the replacing of a word with letter-number combination called rebus is a common strategy found in many CMC. However, only one instance of rebus is found in the corpus. The interactants seem to prefer using numbers only as numbers, dates, or

sequences. Perhaps rebus, which is defined by Crystal (2001:425) as "the letters, numbers, or other symbols to stand for whole syllables or words", requires more cognitive effort to use. The sole sample from the corpus is reproduced in Figure 7.5c:-

kway said…

y me pula??... 1st love??.. i nt yet been couple **b4** la... [250109]
[Why are you talking about me instead? First love? I have never even been in a relationship before.]

Figure 7.5c: Replacing a word with a rebus

Using phonemic equivalents to spell words

English orthography is not phonemic, hence the spoken sounds of the language sometimes do not correspond with the spelling of the words. However, using phonemic equivalents to spell words is a constant feature found throughout the corpus. This is distinct in the corpus because of the non-standard English pronunciation used by the Malaysian speakers of English in the blogs where their writing represents their speech. In the samples reproduced in Figure 7.6, *wan*, *din*, and *dun* are how the words are usually spoken in informal speech in Malaysia, with the final consonant being dropped:-

tc said…

many gal **wan** ur number then said if they are munchy biscuit then only acceptable.. [250408]
[Many girls wanted your phone number, but I told them they would only be accepted if they are 'munchy' (sounds similar to his girlfriend's name) biscuits.]

syee said…

Din laugh?? waste my 5 cent to send that joke to you lorr?? But nvm now u r ok the good!!hehe **dun** give up hope... [010508]
[You didn't laugh? Have I wasted 5 cents sending that joke to you? But never mind since you are now okay (laughs). Don't give up hope.]

Figure 7.6: Spelling words using phonemic equivalents

Other examples from the corpus in this sub-category are *birday* [birthday], *dis* [this], *den* [then], *fren* [friend], *kool* [cool], *noe* [know], *oni* [only], *sumthing* [something], *tot* [thought], *wat* [what], and *wit, wif* [with].

Truncating or Contracting unstressed syllable(s), silent letters, and vowels

Some examples from the corpus that belong in this sub-category are *bout, abt* [about], *coz, cos* [because], *da* [the], *dono* [don't know], *dowan* [don't want], *dwn frm* [down from], *frdship* [friendship], *fker* [fucker], *ftsal* [futsal], *gt* [get, got], *haven* [haven't], *jus, juz* [just], *mv* [movie], *nt* [not], *nonit* [no need], *pic* [picture], *plz, pls* [please], *slp* [sleep], *stg* [something], *tht, tat* [that], *thx* [thanks], *tot* [thought], *wht* [what], *watever* [whatever], *wun* [won't], *ll* [will], *u ll* [you'll], *u're* [you're], *ur, yr* [your], *urs* [yours], and *urself* [yourself], while *ckt* [circuit] truncates and uses the sound of the second consonant and not the spelling. Some samples from the corpus are reproduced in context in Figure 7.7:-

tc said… wat the thing?? **don** so hamsap can **onot**...?? [200408] *[What's the thing you're talking about? Can you not be so perverted?]*
ryl said… so song.. can meet old **frens**.. i **rely** miss inti again [240408] *[How nice! You can meet old friends again. I really miss INTI college.]*

Figure 7.7: Truncation or contraction of unstressed syllables, silent letters, and vowels

Summarising the use of non-standard spelling as a communicative strategy in the blog communication of the participants in this study, six types were detected. Figure 7.8 shows an overall picture of this strategy used in the corpus:-

Using …	
a. letter(s)	u [you], y [why], r [are], c [see], n [and], d [the, already], v [we], b [be].
b. number(s)	2 of us [two of us], the first 1 [the first one],
c. symbol	= [equals, same as], fu**er [fucker], f*cking [fucking], ?? [what], #23 [number 23]
d. letter-number combination & rebus	1st [first], 3x [three times], b4 [before]
e. the sound of the word(s)	wats [what's], birday [birthday], don, dun [don't], din [didn't], dis [this], den [then], kool [cool], noe [know], oni [only], and sumthing [something]
f. Truncating or contracting unstressed syllable(s), silent letters, and vowels	don [don't], onot [or not], rely [really], ppl [people], dono [don't know], dowan [don't want], dwn frm [down from], ftsal [futsal], mv [movie], nt [not], nonit [no need], slp [sleep], tot [thought], wht [what], ckt [circuit]

Figure 7.8: Types of non-standard spelling used in the corpus

7.1.1.2 Omission of Punctuation

The apostrophe is the most common punctuation mark omitted in CMC because of its dispensable state. Without the apostrophe, the meaning of the word is still intact and recognisable, and it is faster to produce on the computer. In the blog communication, where writing is more likely to represent speech, the strategy of leaving out the punctuation mark was used for contracted words and words which require a possessive marker. The sample in Figure 7.9 shows this strategy used in contracted words:-

zacway said…

but how come my name got fu**er but kennway **doesnt** have de?! [240408]

[but why is fucker attached to my name but not kennway's?]

Figure 7.9: A contracted word with a missing apostrophe

Other examples from the corpus in this same category are *havent, haven* [haven't], *cant* [can't], and *dono* [don't know], while the samples in Figure 7.10 show zero possessive markers where they are actually needed:-

Yy said… u got read **kennysia blog**? Malaysian Dream Girl? (though she got eliminated) [040508] *[Did you read kennysia's blog? About the Malaysian Dream Girl, although she was eliminated from the competition.]*
tc said… mayz: **wen shiun letter** too short.. i retype another 1 d.. yes.. u should treat me.. [040508] *[Wen Shiun's letter was too short, so I have retyped another one. Yes, you should give me a treat.]*
tc said… ya ho.. lol.. some more compensate 1 **month salary**.. haha.. [040508] *[Oh ya (laughs), moreover, I would have received a one month's salary as compensation (laughs)].*

Figure 7.10: Zero possessive markers

7.1.1.3 Dispensing with Capitalization and Intentionally Using the Uppercase

Not using capital letters where they are needed is a strategy frequently employed in Ocean's blog interactions and which is also a common strategy in CMC. In the corpus, this involves not only the initial letter of the first word in a sentence but also in proper nouns and the first person pronoun 'I'. The economy of effort of not having to press the shift key or the Caps Lock key speeds up their writing, and this is especially done when the absence of capitalization does not distort the sense of the word or phrase. As mentioned earlier, getting the message across takes priority over grammatical correctness and formal writing conventions. On Ocean's blog communication, this is an accepted convention and the majority of the interactants were fairly consistent in using the lowercase to start a sentence and when using the first person pronoun. Figure 7.11 shows samples from the corpus which exhibited this strategy:-

ryl said…

so song.. can meet old frens.. i rely miss **inti** again [240408]

[INTI – The name of an international university-college]

tc said…

zacway: lol.. **h**e said u both.. but din mention **louie**.. ahaha!! **i** really LOL.. [240408]

[Initial word in a sentence (He), Proper noun (louie), Pronoun (I)]

Figure 7.11: Absent capitalization

Where there are inconsistencies in capitalizing proper nouns, it is thought that using capital letters was an unconscious action due to prior learning. Two competing systems are involved where there is a subconscious cognitive conflict when writing in the blog, with prior training in using formal writing conventions interfering with the desire to discard such conventions on the informal cyberspace platform. Even when they realised the inconsistencies, they would not take the effort to amend their writing because of the time and effort it would take to do so. A sample of the corpus which shows the inconsistency in capitalizing words is reproduced in Figure 7.12:-

Joe said…

*Come, v go **subang**. Somewhere near **taylor** business building there got nice steamboat. Ex-restaurant owner from **Pulau ketam**. When **Kway** and **ah woon** come down, v meet there wan? Maybe **i** drag **Louie** along if he wanna go [170508]*

[Subang, Taylor, Pulau Ketam: Names of places. Kway, ah woon, Louie: Names of persons. I: first person pronoun]

Figure 7.12: Inconsistent capitalization

However, there are times when the uppercase is intentionally used to emphasize the word being used, or to express the equivalent of shouting in oral interactions. The samples in Figure 7.13 show full block words being used to emphasize the meaning and to bring attention to the words:-

Ocean wrote…

Between, **SAME FEEL**? This one?? LOL.. [270408]

[SAME FEEL: To refer to a past experience his friends knew about, which ended the same way as the one he is blogging about.]

tc said…

ryl, chang n jiang: pls don mention about my hair!! T_T comb also cannot.. style also cannot.. sob sob.. the **NOOB** 'pro' boss fault.. [270408]

[NOOB: to emphasize that though the hairstylist was supposed to be a professional, he was not.]

Figure 7.13: Using the Uppercase for Emphasis

In the corpus, the uppercase is also intentionally used as an artistic effort to draw attention to the importance of the message. In Figure 7.14, the comment was in reply to an entry posted by Ocean who had expressed deep despair over a situation in his life, giving the impression that he had given up all hope. The orthography was different from other comments posted by the same *commentor* not only in the corpus but also in the whole blog. Hence, there is a message in using this unique orthography, and the message is to: 'pay attention to what I'm saying here'. It is an attention getter, and that is precisely the motive of the *commentor*:-

kway said…

yoU noT finISH if u losE,You FINish if you QUit [010508]

[To emphasize the message in order to motivate his friend not to give up.]

Figure 7.14: Using the Uppercase as an Urgent Attention Getter

7.1.2 Emotive representations

One feature that stands out in CMC is the visual representation of the writer's emotion through manipulating texts and punctuations. Graphic representations are not found in the corpus because it is not an integrated function in *Blogger*, neither does it have a pre-set function to translate text

emoticons into graphic ones. However, it is possible to introduce graphic emoticons into the blog by manipulating the formatting manually, but not every blogger knows how to do this or takes the trouble to do it. Many of them prefer to use other quicker ways to express their emotions in the blogs.

In the corpus, emotive representations are liberally used by Ocean and his *commentors*. In fact, this and non-English particles feature prominently in their communication. There is no one standard used to express the same emotions, and even within the same style, for example, using initialism, the abbreviated words could be in lowercase, uppercase, or in mixed cases. As an example, 'laugh out loud' is represented by the initialisms *LOL*, *lol*, and *LoL*. The positioning of the emotive representations can be anywhere in the sentence; beginning, middle, or end of the sentence or phrase.

There are also many variations which express the same emotions. Those found in the corpus are listed in Figure 7.16. The frequency of usage is shown in parentheses and the posts in which they appear are listed in the far left column. Examination of the corpus shows a larger variety of punctuation-based emoticons are preferred by the interactants and the majority of emoticons are usually of happy feelings. It is obvious that this social networking platform is used to exchange happy feelings and to use positive emoticons to help one another cope with happenings in their lives. Many of the positive emoticons are also used to help diffuse tension, introduce laughter and reduce the seriousness of the problems shared on the platform.

7.1.2.1 Text-based

In the corpus, not many text-based emoticons were found because there are not many purely texts or letters that could be combined to form the facial expressions of emotions. The more common ones are those mixed with punctuation:-

Text-based emoticons	Explanation
XD (x9)	Laughing, big grin
xP (x1)	Smile with tongue sticking out
zzz.. (x2) , zzzz... (x1)	Bored, sleep

Figure 7.15: Emotive representations (text-based emoticons) in Ocean's blog

7.1.2.2 Action Words

Action word emoticons spell out the actual emotions the *commentors* were feeling when writing their comments. This strategy evokes the sense or image of the action being performed when the reader is reading the information:-

Action Words	Explanation
lol (x32), LOL (x9), LoL (x5)	laugh out loud, laughter
lolol (x1)	Laugh out loud out loud (for emphasis)
Sob sob (x1), sob.. (x1)	Expressing sadness, unhappiness, distress, or exasperation
Sigh (x2)	Expressing exasperation or sadness at a situation
CHOke (x1)	Feeling touched, or overcome by emotions
wink	Expressing secret understanding

Figure 7.16: Emotive representations (action words) in Ocean's blog

Sometimes, the blogger-*commentor* used a mix of emotive representations in one comment. In Figure 7.17, tc used three types of emotive representations to express his exasperation and anger over the state of his hair; Text-Punctuation Mix (T_T), Action Words (sob sob), and Full Capitalization (NOOB):-

tc said...

ryl, chang n jiang: pls don mention about my hair!! **T_T** comb also cannot.. style also cannot.. **sob sob**.. the **NOOB** 'pro' boss fault.. [270408]

[T_T: sadness. sob sob: exasperation over the results of his haircut. NOOB: expresses anger by emphasizing that though the hairstylist was supposed to be a professional, in tc's opinion, he was not.]

Figure 7.17: A combination of emotive representations in one comment

7.1.2.3 Using Other Types of Punctuation and Symbols

A large variety of emotive representations are found in Ocean's blog communication. These include repetitive punctuations and letters, full block words, symbols, and a mix of text-punctuation, besides those already mentioned in the earlier sections. Based on the long list in Figure 7.19 and the high usage of some of the emotive representations, it is clear that action words are favoured over text-based emoticons. The probable reasons are that a wider range of emotions can be expressed through this manner. They are also easily produced, such as by holding down the exclamation key as many times as desired. There is also no standard rule on how many exclamation marks to use in a row to describe the intensity of one's feelings, but the general understanding is that the more marks there are, the stronger the intensity. For example, in Figure 7.18, *cikkkkkkkkkkooooooooooo* is used with long repetitive letters to adequately represent zacway's indignant feeling for being wrongly accused:-

zacway said...

cikkkkkkkkkkooooooooooo … i don even have that song in my computer ..... louie la!!! [240408]

[Sentence: "Hey (with indignation)! But I don't even have that song in my computer. It's louie, not me!"]

Figure 7.18: Repetitive letters used to express emotions

Figure 7.19 shows a list of emotive representations found in Ocean's blog communication. The left column shows the representations and number of times they were used and the right column explains the representations:-

Repetitive Punctuation & Letters, Full Capitalization, Symbols, Text-Punc Mix	**Explanation**
cikkkkkkkkkkooooooooo (x1)	Expression of unpleasant surprise, equivalent to the expression 'Bloodyhell'.
!! (x41), !!! (x10), !!!! (x1), !!!!! (x2), !!!!!!! (x2)	Emphasis of emotion. The more they are repeated, the stronger the emotions.
?? (x39), ??? (x7), ?! (x1)	To express ignorance, surprise or shock at the information
=.=" (x15), =.=''' (x2), =.= (x3)	Sian (sigh), bored expression
f*cking (x1), fu**er (x1), XXX (x1), !@#$% (x1), f**k (x1), @#$%^% (x1), ~***@.0****~~~~ (x1), @#$^@%^ (x1)	Expressing strong language without wanting to offend, expletives (usually with indignation, anger or mock anger.
HIGH, SAME FEEL, NOT YET, NOOB, PUKE!!, HIDUP PUCUK.., BABI, SIAM AR!!!!!! (x1), SIAM AR!!!!!!! (x1), NO!, BIG SHRIMP STIX (x1), NO NO NO (x1), FEI CAI!! (x1), PUKE!! (x1)	Expresses and emphasizes strong feelings about something.
@,@ (x1)	Disapproval look
:P (x1), =P (x2)	Tongue sticking out, cheeky, playful
:) (x6)	Grin, friendly smile
^_^ (x2)	Titter, smiling sweetly
:D (x3)	laughter
~ ~ (x4)	titter
^^ (x3)	smiling
T_T (x2), T.T (x1)	sad
:((x1)	sad
:S (x1)	Confused smile

Figure 7.19: Emotive representations (punctuations and symbols) in Ocean's blog

Although multiple full stops are found throughout the corpus, they are not listed here because this feature is not considered an emotive representation but simply a stylistic feature which functions as a pause or a break in between phrases or sentences, equivalent to the conventional single full stop or a comma.

7.1.2.4 Onomatopoeic Words

Onomatopoeic words that vocally mimic the sounds of things or actions are found littered throughout the corpus as their function is to create a relaxed, informal, and non-threatening atmosphere in the blog. They are also representations of the writer's emotive state at the time they were written, for example, in Figure 7.20:-

tc said…

- oh.. i remember u said wanna bring me go bbq chicken.. don pura pura forget… since this entry saved u.. u belanja lo.. **muahaha**.. [220809]

  [Particle: lo (used here to gently persuade the person to accept the idea). Muahaha: laughing. Sentence: "Oh, I remember you saying you wanted to take me out for a barbeque chicken meal. Don't pretend to have forgotten it. Now, since this blog entry has saved you from making the same mistake I made, why don't you give me a treat? (laughs)"]

Figure 7.20: A sample of onomatopoeic words used in context in Ocean's blog

As shown in Figure 7.21, a majority of the onomatopoeic words from the corpus represents varying degrees of a happy state of emotion. This suggests that the interactions in Ocean's blog function mainly as a way of keeping in touch and of enhancing ties. It is a platform for camaraderie among offline friends who are no longer physically together:-

Onomatopoeic Words	Explanation
huhu (x1),	Chuckling
Fuyoh (x),	Expression of pleasant surprise and awe
huh (x), hah (x),	Simulates laughing
ahaha!! (x1), hahahaha (x1), hahaa (x2), haha (x26), ahhha (x1), hahahahaa (x1), HAHA (x1), HAHAHA (x1), hahaha (x7)	Simulates laughing
Bwahahahhahaha..... (x1), muahahaha... (x1), muahaha.. (x2),	Simulates laughing
waha (x), wahahaa (x1), wahhahaha!!! (x1), wahahaha.. (x1)	Simulates laughing
wakakakakakakakakka (x1)	Simulates laughing
keke..(x2)	Simulates hilarious laughing at someone
hehe (x9), hehehe (x1),	Laughing
haiz... (x1)	Simulates sighing
ish ish..	Chiding (Tsk! Tsk!)
hoho.. (x1)	Laughing at

Ngek ngek ngek... (x1)	Taunting
Hmm (x1), hmmm (x2), hmmmmm..... (x1)	Thinking
ohh (x1)	pleasantly surprised
CHEH~ ~	Feeling of having had hopes dashed

Figure 7.21: Use of onomatopoeic words in Ocean's blog

7.1.3 Lexical Strategies

The blog corpus shows the bloggers using lexical strategies that form unique and sometimes strange words and phrases in their communication in English on this blogging platform. Some of these that appear in the corpus are non-standard and informal lexical items generally used in informal oral conversations while others are birthed from the melting pot of multi-cultural interactions among Malaysians who come from different ethnic backgrounds; the main ones being Malay, Chinese, and Indian. Further, sub-ethnic groups within these three main groups also contribute to the richness of the English used in Malaysia, as do the variety of differences among Malaysian speakers of English such as their educational background (type, level, and location), their geographical background (born and residing area), their dominant language and English language proficiency, external influences (social groups), and their perception of and attitude towards English and the use of English, etc. (see Figure 2.4).

Writing their blogs which are publicly accessible to all, including speakers of English worldwide, in a variety of English which is dissimilar from the Standard English used by the native speakers of English, shows complex intentions of these young Malaysian bloggers. This complex behaviour necessitated the used of mixed methods in order to understand this social

phenomenon in blogging, "a human product that is socially and culturally constructed" (Hartas 2010:44).

With all the participants in this research are of Chinese descent, the lexical strategies used in their blog interaction show major influences from the Hokkien, Cantonese, and Mandarin languages. However, the influences are not from Chinese languages alone, as being Malaysians, influences from the Malay language are also evident.

It would be safe to say that the communication in English on this platform is understood by most English-speaking Malaysians, especially the younger generation of Malaysians, but other speakers of English who are not familiar with the Malaysian *langscape* would find it difficult to make out what is going on in these interactions in English. The discussion of the findings of this research hopes to clarify and help in the understanding of this English variety that is not only the norm in CMC communication but also in offline communication among English-speaking Malaysians.

7.1.3.1 Codemix

Three types of code-mixing were found in the corpus which I have labelled as Romanization, Original from Source Language, and Literal Translation. In the samples reproduced below, the mixed codes in discussion are highlighted while the explanations and information about the source language are given in square brackets. Additional descriptions are also given in parentheses. Other types of code-mixing found in the samples are underlined, while the six digits at the end of the samples refer to the dates of the post where the samples were taken from. Some of the samples also

contain other non-English features which are discussed elsewhere in this chapter. Such features are not marked in the samples here because they are not relevant to this section, but the same samples may be found in those sections to which the features are applicable, with the relevant features marked.

Romanization

This type of code-mixing happens when words from the source language whose writing system does not use the English alphabet are used in their Romanized forms in the interaction. When read aloud, the Romanized forms sound as they should be in their respective source languages. Instances of Romanized code-mixing were found in **93** comments in the corpus, with some comments containing more than one occurrence. Some samples are reproduced in the figures below. In Figure 7.22a, ryl sees 'dude' as an offensive term, one that makes him feel small because of its connotation to *sozai*, which explains why he is averse to the term being used to refer to him or any of his friends in this blogging space:-

ryl said… can you not call us dude? I **beh song** adi [200408] *[Hokkien: pissed off or feeling sore. Sentence: "Don't call us dudes. I'm already feeling pissed off."]*
ryl said… translation for dude = **sozai** = a word that is quite significant in my life! [200408] *[Cantonese: silly, stupid fella. Sentence: "Dude is equivalent to stupid fella, a term that is a sore point of contention in my life."]*

Figure 7.22a: Sample 1 - Romanized code-mixing with cultural connotations

In Figure 7.22b, tc felt that people who attend such lively concerts should be as excited as the performers on stage, such as jumping around,

following the actions of the performers and singing along, instead of sitting quietly. *Ah pek* is a more respectful term to use than referring to someone as an old man, while *diam diam* carries the connotation of not bothering anyone, and behaving in a proper manner. It seems that while tc wants to express that it is strange for a concert-goer to go to such a lively concert which usually attracts young people, he does not disrespect the old man for his 'eccentric' behaviour but accords him the respect due to his age:-

tc said…

the **ah pek** sit there diam diam only.. dunno come for wat.. [240408]

[Hokkien: old man (a respectful term); Malay: quietly. Sentence: "The old man only sat there quietly. I don't know what he came for."]

Figure 7.22b: Sample 2 - Romanized code-mixing with cultural connotations

In Figure 7.22c, not only do the different codes in Romanized forms carry with them their cultural connotations, they are also more word economical to use than using their equivalents in English:-

zacway said…

whoa .. **che kia** me .. once i opne your blog .. got a ghost looking at me .. [250408]

[Hokkien: caused me to go pale with fright. Sentence: "Whoa! You gave me such a fright. When I opened your blogpage, I saw a ghost looking at me."]

techkie said…

zha dao… [250408]

[Mandarin: The art of tea-making]

Ocean wrote…

tc **ke po chap zui** [270408]

[Hokkien: a busybody who opens his big mouth. Sentence: "tc was a busybody and interrupted when he shouldn't have."]

ufriin said…

- lol…. **guan wo shen me shi**??? [230109]
- *[Mandarin: what's that got to do with me]*

Figure 7.22c: Sample 3 - Romanized code-mixing with cultural connotations

Code-mixing was also used to convey different degrees of intensity which may not be adequately conveyed using English words. In Figure 7.23a, code-mixing was used to convey a stronger intensity than its equivalent in English while in Figure 7.23b, it was used to convey less intensity.

The Hokkien term *kao kao* is also used to mean extra thick and undiluted, as in a cup of strong coffee. So when something is done *kao kao*, it means not holding back the full strength of it. The intensity of this Hokkien term is much stronger than merely saying 'give it to him' or 'not pulling any punches'. Hence, *Kao Kao Lat* would give the desired message that would be clearly understood by this group of Malaysian Chinese youths:-

Ocean wrote...

> **Kao Kao Lat** give him!! [040508]
> *[Hokkien: In full force, full strength, thick, undiluted. Sentence: "Give it to him, don't pull any punches."]*

Figure 7.23a: Code-mixing to convey a more intense message

On the other hand, chiding someone by saying 'aren't you ashamed …?' is equivalent to deriding the person for behaving in a socially inappropriate manner, while *beh paiseh* as in Figure 7.23b, is a lighter version of that. This is aimed at making the person realise his inappropriate manner and behave in a socially acceptable way without saying it harshly. Moreover, on this social platform in Ocean's blogspace, the interaction between him and his friends has always been genial in nature; hence saying 'aren't you ashamed' might sound stronger than intended:-

Joe said...

> eh, when wanna fight with my team leh? u **beh paiseh** wan meh so long i wait for you XD [130508]

[Hokkien: no shame. Sentence: Hey, exactly when are you going to challenge my team? Aren't you ashamed to let me wait so long (laughs)?]

Figure 7.23b: Code-mixing to reduce the force of the message

When using the CS of code-mixing, the interactants sometimes attempt to conform to the English syntax whilst using non-English words, such as in Figure 7.24:-

Ocean wrote…

Part 2 I'll show you all what is **Hamsapnessm** culture in Genting. As **hamsap** as joe. [130508]

[Cantonese: vulgar, lecherous person. Literal translation: salty & wet]

Joe said…

spread ur **hamsapness**....gogogo [090809]

[Cantonese: lechery]

Figure 7.24: Conformation of the English syntax in non-English words

In Figure 7.24, Ocean and Joe added *–ness*, an English noun suffix, to the Cantonese adjective *hamsap* to turn it into a noun. *Hamsap* refers to 'lechery' or 'sexual perversion' depending on where it is used. However, in Malaysia, the term *hamsap* is sometimes not perceived with the same intensity and degree of disgust as 'vulgar' or 'pervert' in English. It can sometimes refer to 'lechery' in a cheeky and perhaps somewhat comical way. It has often been used to describe a popular Chinese cartoon character, *Lao Fu Zi*, in a fifty year-old popular Chinese comic. The following comic strip depicting this character, who is also lovingly known as Old Master Q, would help explain this term (see Figure 7.25):-



Figure 7.25: Perverted/Hamsap (reproduced from Strip #1761, http://www.oldmasterq.com)

Two other examples of Hokkien words code-mixed into Ocean's blog communication are *jio* (to invite) which connotes closeness of friendship, and *bo sim*, a mild chiding (see Figure 7.26). You can invite or ask anyone along to a function or an event, but you do not just *jio* anyone unless you have a close friendship with the person, like the person, and regard the person as someone you would enjoy sharing activities and events with. Hence, to be *jio*-ed is seen as an honour, that the person who *jio*s you trusts you to be in his or her circle of friends.

Bo sim (literal translation: no heart) carries with it an additional connotation other than just being indifferent. Depending on the circumstances in which the phrase is used, it can convey the same meaning as being indifferent or unthoughtful, or, as in Figure 7.26, it is a mild chiding for having forgotten an important event through a slip of the mind or having absent-mindedly done something one should not have done:-

tc said…

kway: don say din **jio** u.. **jio** so many times also ffk.. [130508]
[Hokkien: invite along. Sentence: Don't say I didn't invite you along. Invited you so many times but you always stood me up.]

Ocean wrote…

Though I owe u a lot miscelleneous stuff (don't feel like repay you lar, can ar?) but still, I gone through 364 days waiting for the arrival of your birthday to let you scold me **'bo sim'**. [020809]
[Hokkien: indifferent, unthoughtful. Literal translation: no heart.]

Figure 7.26: Code-mixing to convey meaning in its entirety

The examples given in this section have shown the strategy of using code-mixing in Ocean's blog communication to convey meaning in their entirety with the right connotation, to convey the distance/closeness of relationship, and for the degree of intensity.

Another type of Romanized code-mixing found in the corpus is one in which the Romanized words are accompanied by explanations in English. It was done to assist some of the regular Chinese readers who did not understand Mandarin and also to play a prank on them by deliberately providing wrong explanations of the Romanized words. Figure 7.27 shows the sole example of Romanized words accompanied by its translation into English:-

Ocean wrote…

Steev: Go my house la, I very '**sui bian**' (easygoing) one. [270408]
[Mandarin: not particular about. Sentence: Steev said, "Let's go to my house. I'm not particular about a male and a female being unchaperoned in a house."]

Figure 7.27: Romanized words with English translation provided

Original Code from the Source Language

In the corpus, words in their original source language also appear in the blog communication. This type of code-mixing consisted mainly of Mandarin and Malay words, identifying the users as probably English-speaking Chinese who had received a formal education in both Chinese and Malay. 27 instances of this type of code-mixing were found in the corpus. In the samples below, the Mandarin *pinyin* is provided in parentheses where relevant. The numbers in the pinyin refer to the four tones of Mandarin instead of using the diacritics.

Original Code from the Source Language: Malay (n = 24 instances)

In Figure 7.28a, it is logical for Ocean to mix a common Malay phrase, capable of giving immediate understanding of the message, into his communication in English instead of choosing one from his MT which conveys ambiguous meanings. *Ponteng kerja* is a Malay phrase which refers to the act of workers who malinger. Its Chinese equivalents, such as 偷(tou1) 懒(lan3) or 懒(lan3) 鬼(gui3), which means shirker or lazy bum may not provide the intended meaning, while 推(tui1) 托(tuo1) 工(gong1) 作(zuo4) which means 'shirking from work' or 装(zhuang1) 病(bing4) 的(de) 人(ren2), which means 'pretending to be sick', may also give rise to ambiguity and are a mouthful compared to the two-word phrase in Malay. The English equivalents, such as 'shirk', 'malinger', or 'skive' are also not as commonly used or easily understood as *ponteng kerja*:-

Ocean wrote…

Ended stayed overnight at Genting and take emergency leave **'ponteng kerja'**. lol. so jingak. [240408]

[Malay: skiving. Sentence: We ended up having to take emergency leave to stay overnight at Genting (laughs). That was so unethical.]

Figure 7.28a: Use of the original code from the source language (Sample 1)

In Figure 7.28b, there does not seem to be a pertinent reason for using this specific CS, but it is obvious that the interactants are comfortable mixing the codes in their conversations and with ease, using the same word in various forms of the different word classes (verb: *kaitkan*, adj: *berkaitan*):-

mayz said…

ish ish.. gabriel go wif his fren laa.. y arr.. u arr.. keep on **kaitkan** me and him. ish ish.. ~~ [130508]

[Malay: link or relate. Sentence: "Tsk! Tsk! Gabriel went with his friend, not with me. Why on earth do you keep linking him to me? Tsk! Tsk!]

tc said…

mayz: u n him **memang berkaitan** ma.. [130508]

[Malay: obviously connected or related. Sentence: "You and him are obviously in a relationship" (teasing)]

Figure 7.28b: Use of the original code from the source language (Sample 2)

In the next example, we see a well-used umbrella term in Malay, *kena*, which is used in a variety of situations to refer to 'being at the receiving end'. Although the English 'got' is popularly used in ME structures (n = 28) to refer to the passive sense of the verb, it is sometimes replaced by the Malay word *kena*. In Figure 7.28c, it is used together with a Hokkien onomatopoeic word, *kiap*, which evokes the image of jiang being sandwiched or wedged by closing automatic gates:-

Ocean wrote…

L. Life isn't complete without?
w/out watch jiang **kena** 'kiap' by kee yei's house huge gate.. (281208)
[Malay kena: be at the receiving end. Hokkien kiap: a word that simulates the sound of being wedged or stuck in between something. Sentence: "Life isn't complete without watching Jiang get stuck between Kee Yei's huge house gates."]

Figure 7.28c: Use of the original code from the source language (Sample 3)

However, when used in different sentences or situations, *kena* is a versatile word that expresses different meanings such as the English modal 'have to' which expresses a strong obligation, 'to come into contact with', or 'to meet its mark'. In Figure 7.28d, the verb 'scold' (*marah*) is used with *kena* as a passive. Although it is fairly easy to use the phrasal verb 'got scolded' or 'was scolded', the sample shows tc resorting to code-mixing instead. It shows the ease in which he code-mixes in the blog communication. It could be concluded that *got+participle* structure as a passive phrasal verb is not a familiar grammatical structure for tc as a close examination of the corpus reveals only one instance of this structure being used [i.e. got eliminated] (The unique use of 'got' is discussed in another sub-section). Therefore, he used a more common word from a different language source, such as *kena*.

tc said…

i duno bout monkey hit my head with banana but i noe joe hit a guy head with keys.. and provoke the guy below his floor.. and **kena marah**... wahhahaha!!! [281208]
[Malay: got scolded]

Figure 7.28d: Use of the original code from the source language (Sample 4)

Like *kena*, *pula* is another well-used Malay term that has various meanings when used in different situations, and therefore is used by Malaysians of all ethnic backgrounds. *Pula* can be used as a sort of interjection equivalent to 'what on earth' in English, to express that it was an unexpected action or

result, or to express an expected outcome. It can also be used to mean 'instead', such as in Figure 7.28e. However, since instances of 'instead' (n = 3) and 'instead of' (n = 3) are found in the corpus too, it could mean that the mixed code was used for simplification, for the fun of it and simply because the interactants had it in their repertoire and were able to use it:-

kway said…

y me **pula**?? ... 1st love??.. i nt yet been couple b4 la... [230109]

- *[Malay: instead. Sentence: "Why talk about me instead? First love? I haven't even been as a couple in a relationship before.]*

Figure 7.28e: Use of the original code from the source language (Sample 5)

Another probable reason for using words from the source language is that the equivalents in English are not commonly known or there is not an exact equivalent. For example, in Figure 7.28f, *curi-curi*, a Malay word which means 'to do something surreptitiously' or to 'steal a look':-

tc said…

Yy: lol.. u not concentrate enough.. u must b **curi-curi** see those pink dots disappear onot..

[Malay: to steal a look at. Sentence: "(laughs) You were not concentrating enough. You must have stolen a look at the pink dots to see if they had disappeared."]

tc said…

i din blame my parents la.. juz **curi curi** blame.. [290508]

[Malay: on the quiet. Sentence: "Actually, I didn't blame my parents {aloud}. I just did it on the quiet.]

Figure 7.28f: Use of the original code from the source language (Sample 6)

Original Code from the Source Language: Mandarin (n = 3 instances)

Compared to the 23 instances of Malay words or phrases in their original forms that were code-mixed into their blog interactions in English, only 3 instances of code-mixed Chinese characters were found in the corpus (see

Figure 7.29). One main reason is that the procedure for transferring Chinese characters into the blog communication is more tedious and time consuming, while it is easier for Malay words which share the same alphabet as English. It is also easier to transfer bigger chunks of Chinese characters than doing it individually, which is probably there are more code-switching than code-mixing involving Chinese characters in the corpus. In the corpus, short expressions in codes which intersperse with other codes are considered code-mixing while interactions which switch from one code to another, consisting of whole chunks of the different code are considered code-switching (Gumperz, 1982; Crystal, 2010):-

Yy said… **天无绝人之路**, return these 6 words to u... [010508] *[Mandarin expression: Heaven never seals off all exits.]*
ChenHoy said… y i so free ar? duno le...mayb dis is called **忙里偷闲** gua..keke.. [040508] *[Mandarin: loafing in a busy state. "You asked why I am so free? I actually don't know. Maybe this is what people term as 'loafing in one's busy state' (laughs).]*
Ocean wrote… - However I want to say, **青春流逝 (When we getting older) 我们不再 (We don't) 为了生命狂欢 (Cheers for life) 为爱情狂乱 (Crazy for love).** [230109] *[However, I want to say this, "As youth passes us by, we are no longer exuberant about life, nor crazy over love." (song lyrics by Mayday)]*

Figure 7.29: Code-mixing - original code (Chinese) from the source language

In the third sample in Figure 7.29, Ocean used the Chinese characters with explanations in English to help his non-Chinese-reading readers understand his comment. The Chinese expressions in all three samples are not easy for a lay person to translate into English. Using them in their original language allows the writer to express his thoughts in writing

without diluting or distorting the intended meaning, whilst using the English translations alone – "When we getting older, we don't cheers for life, crazy for love" - would not have delivered the strength of the message, and in fact, they sound rather odd on their own.

Literal Translation

Evidence from the corpus also shows that there are times that expressions from the source languages are literally translated into English. Where this strategy is applied, resulting in distortion of language structure, the core meaning remains intact because of the interactants' knowledge of the source language. The resultant twist in the expression is an intentional strategy in the light banter to have fun with the language in their interaction. Some of these are so commonly used that they have become part of the CME construct, such as 'some more' and *tambah lagi* [meaning: moreover], 'also can' which is translated from Mandarin '**也可以**' [ye3 ke2 yi3] and '*juga boleh*' in Malay [meaning: you can also+(do)], and 'where got' [referring to a negation], which is directly translated from the Malay negation '*mana ada*'.

In the present corpus, twenty three instances (= 23) of directly translated code-mixing were found, some of which are reproduced in Figure 7.30. This method of code-mixing also shows the influence of culture on language. In the Chinese culture, food is a major concern as a person's wellbeing is closely connected to his/her ability to support him/her financially by having enough to eat. Having one's rice bowl broken is therefore synonymous to having one's livelihood affected, while having a

'rice bowl made of gold' refers to having a stable job that will not be affected by the economy. This concern is reflected in their language and also in the traditional way in which they greet each other, not with a 'hi' or a 'hello', but with the question, "Have you eaten?" or "Have you had a full meal?" Sample 1 in Figure 7.30, therefore, shows how the language reflects the culture and Ocean's mindset about his job resignation.

Ocean wrote… I'm going to **break my rice bowl** soon. This is not a hasty decision however it's well-planned which I had the intention to leave this hectic yet dreadful place since the first month. [040508] *[Mandarin: da3 po4 wo3 de fan4 wan3. Meaning: affect my livelihood.]*
Ocean wrote… She keep asking how? What is your other plans? Got backup? **A lot a lot**. [260508] He keep asking the fees how much? Where to get the amount of money? Saving enough? **A lot a lot**. [260508] *[Mandarin: hen3 duo1 hen3 duo1. Meaning: a lot of. Sentence: "She asked a lot of questions. She kept asking me how it is, what my other plans were, and whether I had any backup plans. He kept asking me a lot of questions, such as, how much are the free, where I'm getting the amount from, and whether I've saved enough."]*
tc said… WhyAm: enjoy at hk.. don worry.. i will pass by ur house n **see see a bit**..[270109] *[Hokkien: kan4 kan4 yi1 xia4. Meaning: has a look at, do a cursory check. Sentence: "WhyAm, enjoy yourself in Hong Kong. Don't worry. I will go by and check on your house."]*

Figure 7.30: Literal translation from the source language

Samples 2 and 3 in Figure 7.30 reflect the Chinese strategy of repeating a word to express a large amount or a large quantity of. This strategy is transferred into their interactions in English.

Other examples from the corpus which show a literal translation of Chinese phrases include, 'being a light bulb' [meaning: being a gooseberry],

'colour wolf' [meaning: sexual pervert], and 'wait slowly' [meaning: wait patiently].

7.1.3.2 Code-switch

An examination of the corpus reveals that code-switching is used as a strategy by the interactants. Ocean revealed that this was done to express thoughts and feelings that were difficult to put across in English without either distorting the meaning or causing misunderstanding. It was also used when the contents of the entry were of a more private matter. As mentioned earlier, the use of Chinese characters in the blog also requires more time to produce than using Roman characters. Therefore, only four instances of code-switching were found in the corpus. These were huge chunks of phrases and sentences. There were also two entries which were written entirely in Chinese but with an English title. A cursory examination of other entries in the blog which are not included in the corpus also shows other such instances. However, these are not included in this study as they are not part of the corpus.

The first sample in Figure 7.31a shows an extract from Ocean's entry, made up of 292 words of which 37 (13%) were in Chinese. This entry has an English title. Ocean used this strategy because he wanted to accurately quote what his friend had expressed to him in Mandarin. In the second sample in Figure 7.31a, Ocean wrote a very short post consisting of only Chinese words but using a title in English. The message was cryptic as it referred to a matter which only his close friends would know about. Using

this strategy allowed him to limit the number of readers who would understand the more private matter.

The third sample was a whole post with its contents as well as its title written in Chinese. Bearing in mind that Ocean's blog was constructed in English, with the layout and format all in English, there should be a justification for this code-switching. The interview with Ocean, however, revealed that it was simply circumstantial. At the time of constructing this entry (Ocean, 30 Aug 2009), content of which was about his gastric condition, Ocean was not suffering from any pain and could take the time to write about it in Chinese. This contrasts with another entry on the same matter but which was written mostly in English and with an English title for the entry (Ocean, 18 Dec 2009). At that time, he was still in much pain and was feeling too weak to attempt to write in Chinese although he did insert the word 'pain' [**痛痛痛痛痛**] five times in Chinese to emphasize his point. Although not part of the corpus of this study, this entry is mentioned here to show that the choice of language in the blog can sometimes be simply circumstantial.

The final sample in Figure 7.31a again shows Ocean's post written entirely in Chinese but with the word 'Pathetic' as the title. Ocean feels that the Chinese equivalent of the word 'pathetic' gives a much more negative connotation than what he intends it to be. Therefore, he used the English word instead. According to him, there is no Chinese word which can give the equivalent connotation of 'pathetic', although it is of the researcher's

opinion that 可怜 (ke3 lian2) or 'pitiful' would be the nearest equivalent and has a less negative impact than 'pathetic':-

Ocean wrote…

Then kar jun said these in Cantonese sadly, with a little bit of tears when he finished it. 为什么有些人天生富贵，上学都开BMW; 我们却在公司死命打拼，为了那区区的千多块，供车吃饭。 [Fate, 260508]

[Then Kar Jun said these sadly in Cantonese, with tears in his eyes when he finished: "Why are some born rich, drive BMW cars to school; while we have to slave for the company for a meagre income to support ourselves?]

Ocean wrote…

期待已变成了无望的等待。第1273天　大家都笑我了。我寄的，你收到吗？ [Sigh, 281208]

[Anticipation has turned into hopeless waiting. On the 1273rd day, everyone laughed at me. I have already posted it. Did you receive it?]

Ocean wrote…

此情可待成追忆，只是当时已惘然

*[**Title of post**: An idiom which means "Remembering the past with regret because he has missed the boat. What's left is just a memory of someone special.]*

数几年，你用心的奉劝我准时吃饭，你说不定时吃饭会胃痛。
"胃痛很痛吗？"。"很痛！"。"你怎么知道？"　　"我姐也胃痛啊。"
昨天，又胃痛了。频频发生。
真的很痛。不过，至少每次胃痛，都会想起你的劝告，然后，嘴角露出浅浅的微笑。:） [300809]

[A few years ago, you earnestly advised me to eat my meals on time. You said that irregular eating hours can induce gastric pain.
"Is gastric pain very painful?" "Very!" "How do you know?"
"My sister also suffers from gastric pain."
Yesterday, my gastric pain flared up again. This keeps happening.
It was awfully painful. But at least whenever that happened, I would always think of you with fond memories.]

Ocean wrote…

PATHETIC
昨天聊到你们作出国最后的准备，想必你们都很期待。
你说得对，你们离开后，我这里真的没有朋友了。笑我吧。
[Pathetic, 060909]

[Yesterday, we chatted about your final preparations for your study abroad. I'm sure you're all looking forward to it with great anticipation. You said it right. When all of you, I will have no more friends here. You can laugh at me then!]

Figure 7.31a: Code-switching as a strategy (Chinese characters)

Although Romanized Cantonese words were often code-mixed into the communication, there is only one occasion where the whole comment was code-switched in Romanized Cantonese. When uttered, this expression in Cantonese seems to impress the full essence of the meaning rather than its equivalent in English (see Figure 7.31b):-

tc said…

hah?? (rising intonation) ngak kuai sek taufu **ar**?? (rising intonation) [250109]

[What?! Trick the ghost into eating tofu?] (Expresses incredulity at the suggestion)

Figure 7.31b: Code-switching as a strategy (Romanized Cantonese)

7.1.3.3 Abbreviations: Initialism, Acronym, Truncation

Any shortened form of a word or phrase is considered an abbreviation, and this is found in both oral and written communication. Three types of abbreviations are found throughout the corpus – initialism, acronym, and truncation of words. **Initialism** is formed when the first letters of a row of words are used as an abbreviation or expression, with each letter being pronounced separately because they do not form a new word, for example, MSLM (Malaysian Student Leaders Summit), a blogpost title in the corpus. An **acronym** is formed from the initial letter(s) of each of the successive parts or major parts of a compound term (Merriam-Webster Inc., 2010), forming a new word. For example, 'laser' [Light Amplification by Stimulated Emission of Radiation]. Finally, **truncation** refers to words that are not used in full, i.e. shortened words with missing syllables, but which are still recognizable from the given parts. The missing parts are usually the middle and end part of the word, for example, 'para'

(paragraph) or 'bro' (brother). Some common ones that are also accepted in written conventions are names of days and months, and proper nouns which are long, such as Washington, D.C. [District of Columbia]. Samples of each type of abbreviation from the corpus are reproduced below, but the common and standard ones such as P & C, LEDs, KFC, RAM, VIP, and well-known proper names are not included here. Understanding of some of the more unconventional abbreviations depends largely on the interactants' prior and tacit knowledge of the discussion.

Initialism

Interestingly, the corpus shows instances of initialisms of not only English words but also of code-mixed terms, especially expletives. As mentioned in earlier chapters, Ocean does not condone strong language on his blog and therefore the group of interactants on his blog euphemizes strong language using symbols (e.g. *fu**er* or @#$%^%) and initialisms instead of the words in full. Emotive action words which are initialised were also found in the corpus. These are commonly used in CMC for brevity and speed. However, the practitioners do not stick to a particular standard when using initialisms. Figure 7.32a highlights the absence of a standard orthography for using initialisms in blogs. When the emotive action words 'laughing out loud' are initialized, it is a matter of personal preference or ease of typing:-

Yy said...

I was steady until I scrolled to chang's part and **LoL**...
how dare u so rude... [250408]
*[English: **L**augh **o**ut **l**oud. Sentence: "I was all right until I scrolled to the part where Chang commented, (laughs out loud) how dare you be rude."*

tc said…

hahaha… i beh tahan… **LOL**…!! oi.. cannot simply change question.. and mind your language(for J)… u got essential.. we got euphoria… [281208]

*[Hokkien: cannot (beh); Malay: bear it (tahan), also adopted into the Hokkien language. English: **L**augh **O**ut **L**oud. Sentence: "hahaha… I cannot bear it… (Laughs Out Loud) …!! Oi.. you cannot simply change the question.. and mind your language (in your answer in J)… you've got Essential (a nightclub in the UK), we've got Euphoria (a dance club in Malaysia).]*

tc said…

syee: can also.. but i do the counter.. to show u your age increasing every year.. **lol**.. [210909]

*[English: **l**augh **o**ut **l**oud. Sentence: "I can do that too, but I'll do one with a counter that shows your increasing age every year (laughs out loud)."]*

Figure 7.32a: Different ways of writing 'laugh out loud' as an initialism

Figure 7.32b shows some samples of uncommon initialisms found in the corpus. Some of these are culturally influenced, such as in "GG", 'ffk', and 'ccb' in the samples. All the initialisms in Figure 7.32b require a prior or tacit knowledge to understand. For example, Sample Four shows an understood greeting in Malaysia which is commonly used especially during the Chinese New Year season. Truncated words are also found in Samples Three and Five:-

tc said…

it's like u go brothel.. never ask whether ppl are prostitute.. straight away **GG** ppl.. ended up **GG** an aqua.. [130508]

*[Cantonese abbreviated term for prostitutes or soliciting prostitutes: **k**ai1 **k**ai1. **GG** is also an internet slang that is used sarcastically to refer to someone who has done something foolish. Sentence: "It's like when you go to a brothel to solicit a prostitute but did not ask if they are prostitutes, and so ended up soliciting a cross-dresser or transvestite."]*

tc said…

joe: june lo.. u can? See also noe u will **ffk**.. waiting for ur war letter.. [130508]

*[Cantonese: **f**ong1 **f**ei4 **k**ei4. Meaning: not turning up for a prior appointment. Sentence: "It's in June. Can you make it? Looking at the situation, I already know you will stand me up."]*

ufriin said…

ccb, same ques ask again… [281208]

*[A Hokkien vulgar expletive which is used for solidarity between close male friends and usually not used with girls because of its reference: **c**hao4 **c**hee1 **b**ye1. Meaning: smelly cunt. Sentence: "(expletive) Why are you asking the same question again?"].*

WhyAm said…

Happy **CNY**!!! hehehe… [270109]
*[English: **C**hinese **N**ew **Y**ear."]*

tc said…

u do **PCB** or build circuit on **PCB**? i think i have no more chance d.. next sem starting to major in nanotech d.. more to chemical than electronics.. but i wan get some reference from u too.. for **FYP**.. haha.. [210909]
*[English: **P**rinted **C**ircuit **B**oard (term used in Electronic Engineering) and **F**inal **Y**ear **P**aper].*

Figure 7.32b: Samples of initialisms from the corpus

Other initialisms found in the corpus which differ slightly from the norm are *tq* and *TQ* [thank you], where the pronunciation of the second word is used instead of the spelling, *ktv* [karaoke television] and *nvm* [never mind], where two letters in 'television' and 'never' are used instead of only the first letters.

Acronym

Not many acronyms are found in the corpus and those found are common and generally understood ones like *RAM* (random-accessed memory), or those which refer to proper nouns that are familiar to people in special interest groups (SIGs). Figure 7.32c shows an acronym which is familiar to people who play online strategy games. The standard orthography of using block letters for acronyms is also disregarded. With all other words in the same sentence being bereft of capital letters, it can only mean that not using capitalization is a strategy for brevity and ease of use:-

Joe said…

i know my future son will trash u in ftsal and **dota**…..don worry….be happy :D [010508]
*[English: **D**efense **o**f **t**he **A**ncient, name of a computer game]*

Figure 7.32c: Use of an acronym for brevity and speed

Truncation

As expected in computer-mediated communication where brevity and speed is an important issue, the corpus reveals that this interactive writing platform is no exception when it comes to truncating words. Different types of truncation of words are found in the corpus. Truncation of unstressed syllables, silent letters and vowels are discussed in the section on Orthography. This section discusses words with missing syllables usually, but not always, the middle and end part of the word. Figure 7.32d illustrates some samples of truncation from the corpus:-

ryl said… can you not call us dude? i beh song **adi** [200408] *[adi – already. Sentence: "Don't call us dude. I'm already pissed off."]*
tc said… Yy: o.. is like that la.. now i **und** y must 1st love d.. ya.. mayday's lyrics.. haha.. [230109] *[und - understand]*

Figure 7.32d: Truncation of words

Other truncated words found in the corpus which are mostly recognisable are *anw* [anyway], *congrats* [congratulations], *diag* [diagram], *diff* [different], *dy* and *ady* [already], *holz* [holidays], *id* [identification], *m'sia* [Malaysia], *prob* [problem], *ques* [question], and *ustand* [understand].

7.1.3.4 Informal Contractions – gonna, wanna, kinda

Informal contractions which are usually used in informal conversations were also found in the corpus. Ocean reveals that he learnt the contractions such as kinda, wanna, and dunno, from watching American television shows and movies and used them in his communication in order to sound

more natural, especially in informal conversations. The occurrences of the informal contractions in their blog interactions show that it is not only cultural influences but also media influences that add to the richness and uniqueness of their communication. In the corpus, 'wanna' (n=10) was the most popular, followed by dunno/duno/dono (n=7) and kinda (n=1).

However, it was found that Ocean moved in and out of different varieties, almost like 'code-switching'. Although there were occasions when he used the informal contractions in his blog writing (see Sample 2 in Figure 7.33b), he mostly used the formal variety such as 'want to' and 'kind of' even though the sentence(s) in which they appeared were sometimes informal, such as in the first sample in Figure 7.33a. However, in the comments section of his blog where the interactive communication took place, he used the informal variety. Most of his interactants generally stayed with one variety while one of his interactants by the name of Joe used both varieties in the interactive communication with no obvious reasons for his choice (see Sample 3 & 4 in Figure 7.33a). Perhaps this is for the simple reason that he has both varieties at his disposal and using either variety in informal blog interactions is not an issue. Figures 7.33a through 7.33c show samples of informal contractions and their formal versions in the context in which they appear in the corpus. The informal contractions are highlighted in bold while the formal versions are underlined. In the first two samples in Figure 7.33a, Ocean used 'want to' in his blog writing (Ocean wrote…) but 'wanna' in the interactive communication on his blog (tc said…):-

Ocean wrote… Despite of having 2 days very precious annual leave, I was threaten by YL to there to have 3 days 2 nights vacation. Want to rest at home also cannot! [130508]
tc said… Yy and ryl : hmmm.. actually ho.. i **wanna** ask.. wats the meaning.. =.=" [290508]
joe said… i want to sue u..... [060109]
joe said… i **wanna** play the outdoor theme park....eh, when **wanna** fight with my team leh? u beh paiseh wan meh so long i wait for you XD [130508]

Figure 7.33a: Informal contractions – want to vs wanna

Figure 7.33b shows Ocean using both varieties in his blog writing:-

Ocean wrote… That day I woke up around 10 in the morning. After some revision, I felt kind of weird because nobody asking for lunch though it already around 2pm. [110109]
Ocean wrote… **Kinda** funny. The concert was on 19th April (8pm) and we got tickets on 18th April (11pm) [240408]

Figure 7.33b: Informal contractions – kind of vs kinda

Samples 3 and 4 in Figure 7.33c show the different ways in which the informal variety of 'don't know' is constructed:-

Ocean said… Epilogue Being a light bulb wasn't a easy job. However, the payback was a free haircut. The saloon boss said, don't worry I sure cut until you satisfy. Ended up hairy on one side and bald on the other side. !@#$% Tomorrow **don't know** how to face my fellow colleague. [270408]

Yy said… Although I **dunno** what happened. Hope u get through it.. 天无绝人之路, return these 6 words to u… [010508]
joe said… see la…**dono** what you wish for ur birday until chelsea lose till pants drop…. [110109]
jas said… why I am smiley wan I oso **duno** why the smile face pop out itself xP [020809]

Figure 7.33c: Informal contractions – don't know vs dunno

7.1.3.5 Non-English Interjections

A large number of interjections found in the corpus are from the Chinese languages although some English ones such as 'hey', 'oh no', 'yeah', 'tada' and 'whoa' are also used. The interjections in the Chinese languages were used to evoke an immediate understanding of the context and the reason for the interjections. Some of these interjections are onomatopoeic words which convey meanings in the phrases in which they occur.

The non-English interjections also appear in the form of name-calling in the blog. In other situations, this form of name-calling is usually used on deserving characters to shame them. For example, *hamsap lou* is used on a man who is deemed to be lecherous. Some other non-English interjections in the corpus are in the form of rude profanities which are not euphemised, such as *guan ge pi la* (who cares a fart about it) and *chao hai* (a vulgar profanity referring to a part of the female anatomy). The equivalent expression in English would be "Connected to me? My foot!" Evidence of name-calling interjections in mixed languages are also found, such as in the following sentence, where *commentor* ufriin exclaimed: "wei fker…

cant u gt a better pic ah???" [250408]. *Wei* is considered a rude way of getting one's attention, while *fker* is a contracted form of 'fucker'.

In Figure 7.34a, *choi* (with a rising intonation) is an exclamation used to avert the impending misfortune that is expected to befall a person who has unintentionally voiced a negative scenario. It is usually exclaimed with fervour and is the equivalent of saying 'touchwood' in English. This superstitious belief is similar to having walked under a ladder or having a black cat cross your path. The superstitious Chinese believe that if *choi* is not uttered to avert bad luck, whatever negativity that was uttered would come true for the person:-

Ocean wrote… Let's look into the zodiac of Rabbit which is mine. **Choi**, say I accident. [270109] *[Cantonese exclamation: equivalent to saying 'touch wood' to avert bad luck when something negative has been uttered. Sentence: "The horoscope said I would be involved in accidents. Touchwood!"]*
ufriin said… V. Vegetable? **choi**… u la vegetable [281208] *[Sentence: Question V: Vegetable? Touchwood! You're the one who'll be in a vegetable state."]*

Figure 7.34a: The exclamation – *Choi*

Some of the non-English interjections found in the corpus are dependent on the manner in which they are uttered, such as tonal difference, intonation, length, and fervour, to convey the intensity or meaning. In the written blog communication, this is expressed through the context in which the interjections appear. An example is given in Figure 7.34b, where *eh* appears in three different contexts with three different meanings. In the first sample, *eh* is equivalent to the Cockney 'oi' as a rude way of getting a

person's attention. In the second sample, it is an expression of warning and is therefore stronger in tone when vocalised, and in the third sample, it expresses bewilderment at an occurrence and when vocalised, it is longer in length with a rising intonation:-

Joe said… **eh**.....me or tc more hamsap r? [240408] *[Equivalent to the Cockney 'oi', which is a rude way of getting a person's attention. Sentence: "Hey, who is more perverted, tc or me?"]*
Yy said… **Eh**, dun quote Cheeserland blog's content without stating source la... ppl got copyright de...Haha... [040508] *[Expression of warning or disapproval. Sentence: "Hey, you shouldn't quote Cheeserland's blog content without stating the source. It's copyrighted, you know."]*
tc said… :) : **eh**.. how come.. me too.. [rising intonation][020809] *[Expression that shows one is questioning an occurrence that usually doesn't make sense. Sentence: "Now, that's strange. How did that happen? It happened to me too."]*

Figure 7.34b: The interjection – *eh*

Figure 7.34c shows some onomatopoeic interjections from the corpus while other non-English interjections which are not replicated in the diagrams include *wei* (equivalent to 'hey'), *haiz*, (a simulation of sighing), *hur* (right? as a tag), *aiyoo* (exclamation of slight dismay), *walao* or *walao eh* (extreme surprise or incredulity, equivalent to 'Holy smoke!'), *wa* or *wah* (expression of astonishment or wonder), *hah* or *huh* (onomatopoeic word which expresses an indifferent attitude or to show disdain), *blek* (onomatopoeic word representing sticking tongue out at someone, *cheh* (expression made when one's hopes were dashed, or when one finds out that something which was believed to be true is in fact not true), *siam ar* (similar but an impatient and less polite way of calling out 'coming through' to ask others to give way), *aiks* (yikes), and *oi* or *ui* (mild warning for having said or

done something that the other person does not accept, pronounced as 'o-ei'):-

mayz said… **ish ish**.. gabriel go wif his fren laa.. y arr.. u arr.. keep on kaitkan me and him. **ish ish**.. ~~ [130508] *[Sound made to express disapproval. Sentence: "Tsk! Tsk! Gabriel went with his friend, not with me. Why on earth do you keep linking him to me? Tsk! Tsk!"]*
tc said… syee: **ngek ngek ngek**… [020809] *[Sound made to taunt the person.]*

Figure 7.34c: Onomatopoeic interjections

7.1.3.6 Non-English Particles

> *If all the non-English particles including the non-English interjections in the corpus were light bulbs, the brightness of the corpus would be blinding.*
>
> - own saying –

One of the main features found in Ocean's blog communication with his *commentors* are the countless non-English particles which are packed into their communication. Besides those performing as exclamations which are listed in the earlier sub-section, many other non-English particles found throughout the corpus are specific to the Malaysian context. On their own, such particles do not have meanings but in context they add on connotations and nuances, besides creating a non-formal atmosphere which is friendly and non-threatening. Again, many of these non-English particles are of Chinese origin, unsurprising given that the interactants are all Malaysians of Chinese descent. However, these are particles that are found not only in the communication of Malaysian Chinese but also in the communication of other main ethnic groups in Malaysia. The particles from

the corpus are the well-known *lah* (also spelt as *la, laa, lar, larr*) which is of both Malay and Chinese origin (Richards & Tay, 1977; Kwan-Terry, 1978; Goddard, 1994; Pakir, 1992, cited in Lim, 2007), *ah* (also spelt *r, a, ar, arr*), *eh* (*also spelt ei, wei, hei*), *hor* (also spelt *ho, horr*), *har* (also spelt *hah*, *huh*, *hur*, *harr*), *la harr, leh* (also spelt *lea, le, lerr*), *lo* (also spelt *lu, lor, lorr* and *loo*), *ma* (also spelt as *maa, mar* and *mah*), *wo* (*also* spelt *wor*), *yalo* (also spelt *yalor* or *ya* ho to express affirmation or agreement), *ba, de, gua or kua, geh, liao or liow, meh,* and *o,* all of which are of Chinese origin.

The particle *lah*

Fifty two (52) instances of the particle *lah* (including those in its various spellings) were found in the corpus. Usually used at the end of a phrase or sentence, *lah* functions to convey different shades of meaning in the context in which it appeared. Samples of this particle from the corpus are reproduced in Figure 7.35a to show its different meanings. In Figure 7.35a, the left column identifies the *commentor* who used the particle, the numbers in square brackets in the middle column locates the blog entry where the comment was made, and the meaning conveyed by the particle is given in the far right column. The researcher attempts to provide a translation of the comments into Standard English, complete with paralinguistic features. This is provided in the far right column beginning with the word 'Sentence'. The explanations within the wavy brackets { } are not explicitly written by the *commentors* in the blog communication but are derived from the particles in their comments. In other words, the particles function to carry connotations and unexpressed thoughts behind

what was written. Although this sub-section explains the particle *lah*, samples which contain other non-English particles are also explained to assist in understanding the whole comment:-

Commented by	Comment	Explanation
mayz	ish ish.. gabriel go wif his fren **laa**.. y **arr**.. u **arr**.. keep on kaitkan me and him. ish ish.. ~~ [130508]	Particle laa (falling intonation): emphasizes an assertion to correct misinformation/misassumption. Particle arr (rising intonation): expresses mild degree of exasperation. Sentence: "Tsk! Tsk! Gabriel went with his friend, {not with me}. Why on earth do you keep linking him to me? Tsk! Tsk!"
syee	huh earn so much still wanna "A" ppl's ticket haha anyway can belanja me d **larr**!! [240408]	Particle larr: used with a verb (*belanja*: treat) to soften its tone so as not to sound too demanding. Sentence: "Hey, you earn so much, yet you want to 'cheat' other people's ticket (laughs). Anyway, now you can give me a treat {since you got your ticket free of charge}."
Ocean	By the way, have to say Thank you to Dennis for treated us dinner or supper, whatever **la.** [240408]	Particle la: shows that one is not particular about the terms used. Sentence: "By the way, I have to thank you, Dennis, for giving us a dinner or supper treat, or whatever you call it {it doesn't matter what it is called, I appreciate it}."
tc	ryl: missing? come back **la**.. [240408]	Particle la: used with a verb to soften its tone, not as a directive but as a persuasion. Sentence: "Are you missing me? Come back then {since you miss me}."
Ocean	Steev: Then now you alone **lo**? Mary: Ya **lo.** Steev: So danger **o**. I go your house **la.** [270408]	Particle lo(1): Acts as a 'so'. Particle lo(2): expresses the sentiment that it is not what the person had wanted. Particle o: Acts as a warning or an alert. Particle la: acts as a 'so' or an offer. Sentence: Steev: "So, you're now alone?" Mary: "Yes" {that's the unfortunate situation} (expresses resignation). Steev: "Oh, that's dangerous. Why

		don't I go to your house {to keep you company}?''
tc	ryl: tq.. faster come back **la**.. sob.. i wan go ur door there n frighten u **le**.. [010508]	Particle la: acts as the modal 'should' or 'ought to' to emphasize a point. Particle le: reduces seriousness to cover up real feelings. Action Word sob: expresses longing for the person's company. Sentence: ''ryl: Thanks. You should come back quickly {I miss you}. I want to stand outside your door and give you a fright. (covering up real reason for wanting him to come back).''
mayz	then u wait slowly **la harr**.. =P [040508]	Particle la harr: expresses a teasing manner. Sentence: ''You have to wait patiently then, if that is the case (teasingly).''

Figure 7.35a: The particle *lah*

The particle *lah* is versatile in its usage. It can be used as a softening effect of a demand, a directive, or disapproval. It can also do the opposite such as accentuating a point, an assertion (Richards & Tay, 1977), a persuasion or a request. It is also a marker of rapport and solidarity (Tongue, 1974; Richards and Tay, 1977; Wee, 2004). The samples in Figure 7.35a also show how *lah* can be used to express a lighter mode such as teasing, to correct a misassumption, to show that one is not particular about something, and is used in place of 'so' or the modal 'should'. The explanation column which shows the translation of the comments into Standard English proves that it is possible to convey the *commentor's* whole meaning in full English though not in a succinct manner. The interactants instead chose to re-produce the atmosphere of an oral interaction within the blog in order to maintain the camaraderie and friendship they had with one another. It is

the written version of their oral interactions. The strength of the non-English particles in the interactive blog communication is that it eliminates the sense of formality, forges closeness and softens the impact of negative comments or disapprovals. It 'oils the wheel' of the communication that might otherwise cause friction or misunderstanding.

The particle *de* (的)

Unlike the particle *lah* which is well-known in research on ME or Singapore English (Richards & Tay, 1977; Kwan-Terry, 1978; Pakir, 1992; Goddard, 1994; Wee, 2004; cited in Lim, 2007), the particle *de* receives lesser attention and there is very little research on it. In the corpus only seven (7) instances of the particle *de* were found. It functions as a possessive marker in place of the apostrophe+s ('s) which is commonly used in English. It is also sometimes used as an emphasis and this is done by adding *de* to the end of a sentence (see Figure 7.35b):-

tc	u got gmail right.. use ur gmail id.. just sign in.. permanent **de**.. [130508]	de = for emphasis. Sentence: "You have a gmail account. So just sign in using your gmail ID. **It's** permanent."
zacway	but how come my name got fu**er but kennway doesnt have **de**?! [240408]	de = possessive marker. Sentence: "...but why is fu**er attached to my name but not kennway**'s**?"
kway	hey, where is my picture?wit mary **de**...upload back... [270408]	de = for emphasis (expressing which one) Sentence: "Hey, where is my picture? The one **that's** taken with Mary. Upload it back."

Figure 7.35b: The particle *de*

Some samples of other non-English particles used in context from the corpus are shown in Figure 7.35c:-

Commented by	Comment	Explanation
zacway	wa ... ur friend so good 1 **ar**? [falling intonation] [130508]	Particle ar: used in rhetorical questions in expectation of an affirmative response. Sentence: "Wow! Such a really good friend?"
cc	? haunted by ghost den oni u should get out from ur house more often **ma**... who noes 'it' will get tired of u walking here n there den dowan to haunt **liao**. XD [250109]	Particle ma: used to emphasize a point. Particle liao used with dowan (Hokkien): not anymore. Sentence: "If you're haunted by ghost, all the more you should get out of your house more often. Who knows, it will get tired of you moving about and decided not to haunt you anymore."]
Yy	why dun have scorpion 1? My zodiac is scorpio **lea**... [270109]	Particle lea: expresses 'don't you know', or 'it's just that'. Sentence: "Why isn't there any information on scorpion? {It's just that} my zodiac sign is Scorpio."
tc	oh.. i remember u said wanna bring me go bbq chicken.. don pura pura forget… since this entry saved u.. u belanja **lo**.. muahaha.. [220809]	Particle lo: used here to gently persuade the person to accept the suggestion/idea. Sentence: "Oh, I remember you saying you wanted to take me out for a barbeque chicken meal. Don't pretend to have forgotten it. Now, since this blog entry has saved you from making the error I made, why don't you give me a treat? (laughs)"
syee	wow...so good..haha next time do a blinking happy birthday one for me **lerr** [210909]	Particle lerr: used to gently persuade one to do something. Sentence: "Wow! You're so good at it (laughs). Do one for me next, one with happy birthday blinking lights {please}."

Figure 7.35c: Other non-English particles from the corpus

As can be seen from Figures 7.35a through 7.35c, the non-English particles are located at the end of a phrase or a sentence, or after a pronoun for emphasis. Although it is possible to convey the *commentor's* whole

meaning in full English, such as is shown in the explanation column, using the non-English particles instead of English discourse markers allow the *commentors* to deliver the full connotation and nuances of their message in a more succinct manner.

The interactants are able to re-produce the atmosphere of an oral interaction within the blog in order to maintain the camaraderie and friendship they had with one another. The interactive blog communication is therefore the written version of their oral interactions. The strength of the non-English particles in the blog discussion is that it adds character to the communication, eliminates the sense of formality, forges closeness and softens the impact of negative comments or disapprovals. It 'oils the wheels' of the communication that might otherwise cause friction or misunderstanding when Standard English is used among close Malaysian Chinese friends from different educational background.

7.1.3.7 Internet Slang

Another lexical strategy found in the corpus is the use of Internet slang terms that are coined through constant use by Internet users. However, there are not many such instances from the corpus. They are 'RAM-whore' [060109] which describes computer programs which use a large amount of random-access memory to run, 'you got mail' or 'u got mail' [210909], which is computer-speak, and 'tagging people' [281208] which refers to targeting certain readers to answer a list of questions in the blog, and those targeted would have to answer the questions in the best or most hilarious

way they can, and then continue the process by tagging others to do the same. It has the effect of a chain-letter.

7.1.4 Syntactic Strategies

The many different non-English particles in the corpus are used in different ways in the communication, some as lexical strategies and some as syntactic strategies.

However, as a large number of the phrases and sentences containing many different non-English particles are used in different ways, these samples unavoidably appear again in different sub-sections throughout this chapter, although they discuss different particles in the sentences. This method of presenting the data has been chosen so that the discussion of the different features is not clustered under one big generic section on the usage of non-English particles.

7.1.4.1 Non-English particles in Question Forms

One obvious way in which the non-English particles are used in the corpus is as question words. These are used instead of wh-words or auxiliary verbs which start question sentences. The non-English particles in question forms are also used together with wh-words, and they appear at the end of the question forms. Most of these question forms are easily identified by the giveaway question marks at the end. The non-English particles which are commonly used in the question forms are *ar* (*r*, *ah*, *arr*), *meh*, and *hah*

(*huh*). Figure 7.36a exhibits the non-English particles which are used in the positive question forms:-

Yy said… u mean they are couple **a**? (falling intonation) [270408] *[Sentence: "**Do you mean** they are a couple?" (asking for confirmation)]*
tc said… ch: wei.. y so free **geh**? [rising intonation] No need practise **ar**? [falling intonation] [040508] *[Hey, how come you are so free (Expresses surprise)? **Don't you have to** practise? (Asking for confirmation. Also functions as a negative question)]*
tc said… **hah**?? (rising intonation) ngak kuai sek taufu **ar**?? (falling intonation) [250109] *[What?! **Are you sure** eating tofu can scare away ghosts?] (Expresses incredulity at the idea)*
Joe said… you prepare wear wear something prootect your little brother…sports planet last time v play there wan **r** (falling intonation)? *[Sentence: "You be prepared to wear something to protect your 'little brother'. **Shall we** play at the sports planet where we previously played?"]*
Joe said… **eh**…..<u>me or tc</u> more <u>hamsap</u> **r**? (rising intonation) [240408] *{Oi!, **who** is more lecherous, tc or me?*

Figure 7.36a: Non-English particles as positive question words

The particle *ar* (including *r, a,* and *arr*) can be used with rising and falling tones. Although it is not possible to know this through the written form, the context in which this particle appears provides the clue and thence its function in the sentences. When used with a falling intonation (see Samples One to Four in Figure 7.36a), it does not function as an enquiry seeking an answer, but as a confirmation of what one already knows. However, sometimes *r* in a falling intonation acts as a suggestion in the form of a question (see Sample Four in Figure 7.36a). When used in a rising tone, it takes the form of an enquiry (see Sample Five in Figure 7.36a). It is also

sometimes used as a negative question word (see Sample Two in Figure 7.36a).

In Figure 7.36b, the particle *huh* or *hah* (see Sample Three in Figure 7.36a) in a rising intonation functions as an exclamation, replacing the question word 'What':-

syee said…

> **huh**... (rising intonation) who's your pig?? can't even see her face.. dun hide hide larr [020809]
> *[What? Who's your pig? I can't even see her face. C'mon, don't hide in the shadows.]*

Figure 7.36b: The particle *huh* as the question word 'What'

Like the particle *ah* in a falling intonation, *lorr* with a falling intonation (see Figure 7.36c) serves to seek confirmation of what one already knows. It can be seen as replacing the question tag. Using *lorr* indicates that although syee felt that she had wasted money sending the blogger a joke which did not even make him laugh, she was not upset about it. Using *lah* instead would have given the indication that she was:-

syee said…

> Din laugh?? waste my 5 cent to send that joke to you **lorr**?? [falling intonation] [010508]
> *[Sentence: "You didn't laugh? So I wasted money sending that joke {via sms} to you, didn't I?" (with mock indignation)] OR*
> *[Sentence: "You didn't laugh? So I wasted money sending that joke {via sms} to you, right?" (with mock indignation)]*

Figure 7.36c: The particle *lorr* as a question tag

The particle *meh* is usually used in question forms with a rising intonation. It expresses not only doubt but also the view of the person using it, for example, that something is unbelievable or unacceptable. In Figure 7.36d, *meh* is used in negative question forms. In Sample One, *meh* expresses

Yy's view that even old folks can have an interest in concerts while in Sample Two, it shows zacway's disapproval and perhaps annoyance over the choice of the photo posted in the blog. In Sample Three, it expresses ryl's opinion that the blogger's photo should have been posted as well:-

Yy said… a pek cant watch concert **meh** =.= [rising intonation] [240408] *[Sentence: "**Can't** old men watch concerts (sighs)?" or "**Aren't** old men allowed to watch concerts (sighs)?" {Instead of asking 'Why can't old men watch concerts'?}*
zacway said… cannot choose other better photo **meh**? [rising intonation] [250408] *["**Couldn't** you have chosen other better photos?"]*
ryl said… no post your photo **meh**. [rising intonation] [270408] *[Sentence: "Why **didn't** you post your photo (wondering tone)?"]*

Figure 7.36d: The particle *meh* in negative question forms

Figure 7.36e shows meh in positive question forms. Similar to meh used in negative question forms, it expresses doubt and the view of the *commentor*. In Sample One of Figure 7.36e, it expresses Yy's scepticism and in Sample Two, disbelief:-

Yy said… u got money **meh**? [rising intonation] [170508] *[Sentence: "**Are you sure** you have the money for it?"*
tc said… Yy: haha.. ya ya.. black dog blood.. i juz recall it.. rice got **meh**?? lol.. [250109] *[Sentence: (Laughs) Ya, ya. Black dog blood {can ward off ghosts}, I've just recalled. But **are you sure** rice does that too?" (doubting the info)]*

Figure 7.36e: The particle *meh* in positive question forms

Figure 7.36f shows the combination of non-English particles and question words used in forming questions. In Sample One, 'why' was omitted and replaced with the particle *ah*. Together with the negative modal 'can't', *ah*

adds an indignant tone to the question, expressing the sentiment of the *commentor*. In Sample Two, *geh* adds the element of being surprised that the person seems to be so free when he is expected to be busy at this time. n, i.e. that the *commentor* is surprised that ch seems to have free time. Without *geh* in Sample Two, the question would sound terse, like an interrogation. In Sample Three, particle *le* softens the question and presents it as a teasing and not a query. In Sample Four, *leh* expresses impatience, while *meh* softens the chiding tone and expresses the negative question form, i.e. 'Aren't you…':-

ufriin said… wei fker... **cant** u gt a better pic **ah**??? (rising intonation) [250408] *[Sentence: "Hey, fucker, **couldn't you have** used a better picture?" (indignant or chiding tone)]*
tc said… ch: wei.. **y** so free **geh**? [rising intonation] No need practise ar? [falling intonation] [040508] *[Hey, why are you so free (**Expresses surprise**)? Don't you have to practise? (Asking for confirmation)]*
Ocean wrote… But I have no idea at all. Hmm, **how le**? (rising intonation) [250408] *[Sentence: "But I have no idea at all. So, how now?"]*
Joe wrote… eh, **when** wanna fight with my team **leh** (rising intonation)? u beh paiseh wan **meh** (falling intonation) so long i wait for you XD [130508] *[Sentence: "Hey, when exactly are you going to compete with my team? "**Aren't** you embarrassed letting me wait so long for it?" ('Meh' softens the chiding tone)]*

Figure 7.36f: Non-English particle and question word combination in forming questions

The examples and explanations above show that the non-English particles perform different functions in the context in which they appear. They take the place of question words as well as work together with them to present additional but important information which expresses the message clearly

in a succinct manner. Each of the particles conveys different connotations when expressed in different contexts and with differing intonations. As a result, besides creating the atmosphere of an interaction taking place orally within the blog, Ocean and his *commentors'* choice of using these Malaysian features enable them to interact without misunderstanding each other, whether in terms of the message they convey or in the manner they conduct their communication with one another.

7.1.4.2 Omission of non-content words

Omitting non-content words is a common strategy for speed and brevity in CMC. Although the blogging platform allows for long comments to be posted, most comments in Ocean's blog are usually short or of average length. Besides speed and brevity, not having to trouble themselves with the grammatical accuracy of their writing on a platform that does not need it, makes it less troublesome for them to write their comments. A *commentor* does not have to spend time constructing and editing full sentences if the omission of non-content words does not distort the meaning of the sentences. This strategy was found throughout the corpus. The non-content words omitted were mostly articles, modals, auxiliary verbs, and auxiliary verbs acting as main verbs and question words. In Figure 7.37, the type of word omitted is given in the explanation section in square brackets and the missing part is highlighted in bold:-

tc said…

btw.. taylor's having entrepreneur's day on 5th or 6th.. wanna go? [170508]

*[Missing question word: Do. Missing pronoun: you. Missing possessive: their. Sentence: "By the way, Taylor's {College} is having **their** Entrepreneur's Day on 5th or 6th {June}. **Do you** want to go?"]*

Ocean wrote…

need to include mine onot? [281208]

[Missing question word: Does.
*Sentence: "**Does** mine need to be included?"]*

Ocean wrote…

X-men fight ultraman who win?? [281208]

[Missing conditional: If. Missing article: the. Missing future tense: will.
*Sentence: "**If the** X-men fight ultraman, who **will** win?"]*

Figure 7.37: Omission of non-content words

7.1.4.3 The Malaysian English Syntax and Lexical Features

Some synctactical features of ME found in the corpus include the indiscriminate use of 'got', 'then', 'one', 'already', 'last time', 'also can/can also', 'how come', 'can or not', 'follow', 'bring', and wh-word ending (discussed in the next sub-section). Besides the cultural aspects of using such features, some of these features also allow for brevity and speed as the sentences are usually shorter than the lengthier Standard English version. Evidence of this is found in the samples in this sub-section.

Got

'Got' is used lexically and structurally in CME. Although this usually appears in the informal communication of English-speaking Malaysians, it is also found in their formal communication especially in lower-level workplace meetings (see Morais, 2000; Nair-Venugopal, 2003). In the corpus, 36 instances of 'got' at the lexical and structural levels were detected. 'Got' was used regardless of tense (present and past tenses) or plurality (singular and plural), and was used as an easy generic word to replace auxiliary verbs acting as main verbs and other verbs such as 'receive', 'obtain', or 'bear', as shown in Figure 7.38a. It certainly takes

more effort to come up with different words which could easily be replaced with just a singular 'got':-

Ocean wrote… Then she told me, my cousin just **got** JPA scholarship to US. [260508] *[got = obtained/been awarded. Sentence: "Then she told me that my cousin had just obtained/ been awarded a scholarship to {further his studies} in the US."]*
tc said… Yy: haha.. ya ya.. black dog blood.. i juz recall it.. rice **got** meh?? lol.. [250109] *[got = involves. Sentence: "(laughs), Yes, black dog's blood. I've just recalled. {But} are you sure it involves rice (laughs)?"]*
syee said… ohh..not bad so fast **got** job d..next time go back malaysia treat me ok?? [090809] *[got = found. Sentence: "Oh, that's not bad, you found a job so fast. When I next go back to Malaysia, you must give me a treat. Ok?"]*

Figure 7.38a: The use of 'got'

<u>Then</u>

Another feature of the ME syntax found in the corpus is the use of 'then'. This usually appeared in comments explaining in a story-telling mode about something that had happened, or instructing someone on what to do. The irregular spelling of 'then', *den*, is also found in the corpus. In Figure 7.38b, the meaning of 'then' is given in the square brackets, followed by the translation of the comment into Standard English:-

cc said… ? haunted by ghost **den oni** u should get out from ur house more often ma… who noes 'it' will get tired of u walking here n there **den** dowan to haunt liao. XD [250109] *[den oni (then only) = because … all the more you should. den = will then.* *Sentence: "Because you are haunted by ghost, all the more you should get out of your house more often. Who knows, it will get tired of you walking here and there, and will then decide not to haunt you anymore."]*
kway said… Hey, nonit so ma fan la!!….u just use phone when u r work lo, **then** ur

boss will FIRE!!!!!!! GET out !!!!!.. Easy, right?? [040508]
[then = because of that/as a result of that.
Sentence: "Hey, there's no need to use such a troublesome method. Just use the phone when you're working, and {because of that} your boss will fire you. {He will then say} "Get out!" It's easy, isn't it?"]

tc said…

ryl: if there's a circuit to build accordingly **then** we wont spend 1 month for this.. [210909]
[then = the effect of the cause/ expressing regret.
Sentence: "If there were a circuit to build accordingly, we wouldn't have had to spend one month doing this."]

Figure 7.38b: The use of 'then'

One

The CME sentence structure which incorporates the particle 'one' (or *wan* and *1*) is believed to be an influence from the Chinese sentence structure which ends with the suffix *de* (的) (see section 7.1.3.6). 'One', which is attached to the end of CME sentence structures, is used as a reference to something or as an emphasis (see Figure 7.38c). When used as an emphasis, it can be replaced with the suffix *de* without altering the meaning of the sentence:-

techkie said…

wah… where u got my pic that **one**… [250408]
[one = referring to a specific picture. Sentence: "Hey, where did you get that picture of mine?"]

tc said…

true **1**.. i tried d.. [080109]
[1 = emphasizes 'true'. Sentence: "It's true. I have already tried."]

jas said…

why I am smiley **wan** I oso duno why the smile face pop out itself xP [020809]
[wan = emphasizes that it's a smiling icon. Sentence: "I too do not know why my id pops up as a smiley." (tongue-in-cheek remark)]

Figure 7.38c: The use of 'one' (or *wan* and *1*)

Already

In CME syntax, 'already' is sometimes used as a simplification device. Whole phrases such as 'I have already done it', 'I have decided to …', or to refer to a situation that is the reaction or the effect of a cause, can be replaced with just one word – 'already'. In the corpus, 'already' is most of the time written in simplified form or spelling such as *d*, *dy*, or *adi* (see Figure 7.38d):-

tc said… very leng zai **dy** la.. no need la.. [250408] *[dy = enough. Sentence: "You are handsome enough, so you don't need to do that."]*
WhyAm said… tc tc tc… you are so lucky **already**.. [290508] *[already = refers to present state. Sentence: "tc tc tc… you are already so lucky."]*
tc said… everytime startup RAM used up 400/512Mb.. need to upgrade RAM **d**.. [060109] *[d = it's time to do something. Sentence: "Everytime I start {the computer}, it uses up 400/512Mb of memory. It's time I upgraded the RAM."]*
ryl said… hello? people using Windows 7 now **adi**.. Vista is a RAM-whore. [060109] *[adi = have moved on to. Sentence: "Are you daft? People have already moved on to Windows 7 since Vista uses too much RAM to run."]*
Yy said… ooo, so kool! i wanna change course **dy**… [210909] *[dy = effect of a cause. Sentence: "Wow, it's so cool! Now you make me feel like changing my course of study."]*

Figure 7.38d: The use of 'already' (or *d, dy* and *adi*)

Also can, Can also

In CME syntax, 'also can' is used instead of '… can also …', 'can also' means 'also possible', while 'also' is frequently used instead of 'too', 'even', 'even if', 'only by', or 'only'. 'Also' (also spelt as *oso*) is also frequently placed at the end of the sentence (see Figure 7.38e):-

Commentor	Quote	Explanation
Ocean	Want to rest at home **also** cannot! [130508]	L1 influence (Malay: pun tidak boleh) [Also = even. Sentence: "I couldn't **even** rest at home when I wanted to."]
tc	joe: june lo.. u can? see **also** noe u will ffk.. waiting for ur war letter.. u typed hamsap thing den deleted it? [130508]	Also = Only by. [Sentence: "It's in June, of course. Can you make it? **Only by** looking at you I can tell you will leave us high and dry. It's like waiting for a war letter that never arrives? {By the way}, did you type something vulgar and then delete it?]
tc	:) : u put smiley i **also can** recognize u.. [020809]	also can = can also, am able to. [Sentence: "Even though you use a smiley as your id, I'm **still** able to /still know your real identity."]
jas	why I am smiley wan I **oso** duno why the smile face pop out itself xP [020809]	oso = too. [Sentence: "I **too** do not know why my id pops up as a smiley." (tongue-in-cheek remark)]
tc	syee: **can also**.. but i do the counter.. to show u your age increasing every year.. lol.. [210909]	[can also = also able to. Sentence: "I **can** do that **too**, but I'll do one with a counter that shows your increasing age every year (laughs)."]

Figure 7.38e: The use of 'also', 'can also' and 'also can'

Last time

In CME syntax, 'last time' does not refer to the final or the most up-to-date. It means 'previously', and is an influence from the Malay and Chinese languages (see Figure 7.38f). However, it must be mentioned here that using this phrase might not be an intentional strategy but rather, an entrenched use in the CME syntax. Although Ocean is aware of the correct term to use in Standard English (i.e. previously), it seems to be simpler to use 'last time' which is more commonly used in CME:-

Ocean said… He said "**last time** the f**cker zennway and keng wei always blasted this song." [240408] *[Sentence: "He said that previously, zennway and keng wei always played this song very loudly."]*
Ocean said… K. Kids? **last time** i wan a football team, now i mature d.. no more la.. now i wan a military squad.. [281208] *[Sentence: "Question K. Kids? Previously, I wanted to have enough kids to make a football team. But not anymore now that I'm more matured. Instead, I now want enough to form a military squad."]*

Figure 7.38f: The use of 'last time'

Follow and Bring

In CME, 'follow' is used to mean 'go along with' and 'bring' is used to mean 'take' (see Figure 7.38g). Again, this is probably not an intentional strategy as the difference is not commonly known among English-speaking Malaysians:-

Commentor	Quote	Explanation
Ocean	CW all of the sudden feel like eating KFC, and therefore I was asked to follow him. [220809]	follow = come/go along with/to accompany. [Sentence: "All of a sudden, CW felt like eating at KFC and I was asked to **go along**."]
tc	oh.. i remember u said wanna **bring me** go bbq chicken.. don pura pura forget… since this entry saved u.. u belanja lo.. muahaha.. [220809]	bring me = take me out. [Sentence: "Oh, I remember that you wanted to **take me** out for barbeque chicken. Don't pretend that you've forgotten. Since my {blog} entry has saved you {from making the mistake I made}, you must give me a treat (laughs)."]

Figure 7.38g: The use of 'follow' and 'bring'

Repositioning of Wh-word in Question Form

In CME syntax, the question word is placed at the end of direct question forms instead of at the beginning. For indirect question forms, it is placed within the sentence. Using this syntactical structure gives more emphasis to the question word, i.e. the information which the question seeks. In oral communication, the question word is uttered with more stress and emphasis. This structure, together with other CME features found in the interactive blog communication, brings alive the communication and makes it similar to an oral interaction. The structures and features carry with them all the nuances and shades of meaning that are intended to be conveyed. Samples from the corpus showing the position of question words in ME sentence structures are shown in Figure 7.39:-

ufriin said… take my helmet pic for **wht**...lol... [250408] *[Sentence: "Why on earth did you take my picture with my hair looking like a helmet (laughs)?"]*
kelly said… hey, the blood belongs to **who**? [130508] *[Sentence: "Hey, whose blood is that?"]*
Ocean wrote… Hey, please stop piercing **can**? I feel so pain looking at your masterpieces. [020809] *[Sentence: "Can you please stop getting your ears pierced? I can feel the pain just by looking at your punctured ears."]*
tc said… joe: eh.. u medicine student come here do **wat**? [130809] *[Sentence: "Hey, you're studying medicine, what are you doing here {commenting on engineering issues}?"]*

Figure 7.39: Wh-word at the end of sentences

The discussion in this section has shown the richness of the language of ME, especially CME. The lexical items, the rearranged structure of the

sentences, the non-English words and phrases which are imported into the communication carry with them rich cultural information and nuances of the message. These strategies create the atmosphere intended in the blog, i.e. light-hearted camaraderie which also allows criticisms to be less threatening to the ego; and more was conveyed by the choice of the variety of English used by these English-speaking Malaysians than the literal meaning of the words.

7.2 Expectation of Prior Knowledge or Tacit Information

One tell-tale sign of a blog being used to maintain communication or a relationship with existing personal friends is the amount of 'social steganography' (boyd and Marwick, 2011) found in the blog where readers are required to have tacit information in order to engage in the interactive writing or to understand the communication that is taking place in the blog space.

Within the blog, a few layers of communication take place. The outermost layer is where the interaction can be understood by anyone who has prior knowledge of the language(s) used. On Ocean's blog, it refers to Standard English, which is the main language used in the blog, Mandarin, Hokkien, Cantonese, and Malay. Anyone who understands these languages will be able to understand the outermost level of communication within the blog and will be able to participate in the interaction. It also refers to the language of CMC and computer-speak, where those who understand the

writing conventions in CMC can participate in the communication. Figure 7.40a show examples of this layer of communication from Ocean's blog. The explanation column dissects the comment to show the type of knowledge that is required of the reader or *commentor*:-

Commentor	Quote	Explanation
ChenHoy	congrats..u have resigned...play kao kao after tat… [040508]	1. congrats: congratulations (**English**) 2. u: you (**CMC**) 3. have resigned, play: **English** 4. kao kao: in full strength, meaning to your heart's content (**Hokkien**) 5. after: **English** 6. tat: that (**CMC**) [Sentence: "Congratulations for having resigned from your job. Now that you have resigned, you can relax to your heart's content."]
Yy	lol. ryl, u really standing on the edge of technology... Like to test beta so much… [060109]	1. lol: laugh out loud **(CMC)** 2. ryl: name in **English** 3. u: you (**CMC; English**) 4. really, standing on the edge of technology, like to test beta so much: **English** 5. test beta: **Computer speak** 6. so much: **English** [Sentence: "(Laughs), Ryl, you really want to be at the forefront of technology, don't you? Always testing out the beta stage of computer programs."]

Figure 7.40a: Expectation of prior knowledge – level 1

The second layer of communication gives access to those who not only understand the languages used but who are familiar with the region where the blog is located, i.e. the Asian region in general and specifically Malaysia. If the readers are from the same region, have been to the region, or have worked in the region, it is possible for them to understand the second layer of communication in the blog because the references made

are familiar to them, such as the names of places. Bearing in mind that the regular and main interactants in the blog are young adult Malaysian Chinese, this layer also includes prior knowledge gained from exposure to the Malaysian media. In Sample Three of Figure 7.40b, to 'A' people's ticket means to cheat others of their tickets, an influence from Taiwanese talk shows broadcasted on Malaysian television. As these Taiwanese talk shows are shown in Mandarin, it is assumed that the audience would be largely Chinese-educated Chinese, and therefore, blog readers who would be able to understand the comment made by syee would most probably be Chinese-educated Malaysian Chinese or Taiwanese Chinese. Likewise in in his blog entry dated 29th May 2008 where Ocean lamented about his fate. In the interactive communication, he replied "ok ok.. I go buy crayon shin chan..", when ChenHoy advised him to read more motivational books. 'Crayon shin chan' refers to a cartoon magazine which depicts a 5-year-old character in a humorous Japanese manga/anime series which was aired in Malay on Malaysian television networks. Shin Chan is the Japanese version of Calvin in the cartoon strip 'Calvin and Hobbes'. Only blog readers who have watched this series or read this magazine would understand the reply made by tc in his blog. tc's comment meant that he acknowledged ChenHoy's advice by saying he would get his motivation regarding fate from reading the Crayon Shin Chan series about how this five-year-old coped with learning appropriate behaviour while growing up.

In Figure 7.40b, the first (1st) and second (2nd) layers of prior knowledge expected are explained:-

Commentor	Quote	Explanation
ryl	so song.. can meet old frens.. i rely miss **inti** again [240408]	1. so: **English** (1st) 2. song: nice (**Hokkien** - 1st) 3. can meet old: **English** (1st) 4. frens: friends (**CMC** - 1st) 5. i: I (**English** – 1st) 6. rely: really (**CMC** – 1st) 7. miss: **English** (1st) 8. inti: a Malay word for 'ingredients' (however, not the meaning used in the quotation) inti: INTI International University & Colleges (Name of a well-known Malaysian university-college, previously known as INTI College) – **2nd** 9. again: **English** (1st) [Sentence: "It's so nice meeting old friends. I really miss the time when we were together at INTI."]
Joe	Come, **v** go **subang**. Somewhere near **taylor** business building there got nice steamboat. Ex-restaurant owner from **Pulau ketam**. [170508]	1. Come: **English** (1st) 2. v: we (**CMC** – 1st & 2nd) 3. go: **English** (1st) 4. subang: Subang Jaya (an urban area in the Klang Valley in Malaysia – **2nd**). {The implication is that it is not too far away} 5. Somewhere near: **English** (1st) 6. Taylor business building: Taylor's College Subang Jaya (Name of a well-known pre-university college) – **2nd** {Used as a landmark for direction purposes} 7. there got: there is (**CME**) – 1st 8. nice steamboat: a good place offering hot pot food (**ME**) – 1st 9. Ex-restaurant owner from: former restaurant from (**English** 1st) 10. Pulau ketam: Pulau Ketam or Crab Island (Name of an island off the port of Klang in Malaysia, known for its fishing activities and seafood) – **2nd** {The implication is that it would be worth having steamboat at the restaurant in Subang Jaya because the owner is a restaurateur from a place well-known for its seafood delicacies} [Sentence: "Come, let's go to Subang Jaya. There's a nice steamboat restaurant somewhere near Taylor's business building. The owner is a former restaurateur from Pulau Ketam.]

syee	RM O ticket?? huh earn so much still wanna "**A**" ppl's ticket haha anyway can belanja me d larr!!coz u save the ticket manoey:P [240408]	1. RM: Ringgit Malaysia (**currency** – 1st) 2. 0: **amount** (1st) 3. ticket??: **English** (1st) 4. huh: Interjection (**CME** – 1st) 5. earn so much still: **English** (1st) 6. wanna: want to (**Slang** – 1st) 7. "A": cheat – **2nd** (influence from Taiwanese talk shows) 8. ppl's: people's (**CMC** – 1st) 9. ticket: **English** (1st) 10. haha: **onomatopoeic** word (1st) 11. anyway can: **English** (1st) 12. belanja: give a treat (**Malay** – 1st) 13. me: **English** (1st) 14. d: already (**CMC** – 1st) 15. larr!!: non-English particle (CME – 1st) 16. coz u: because you (**CMC** – 1st) 17. save the ticket: saved on the ticket (**CME** – 1st) 18. manoey: money (**CME** – 1st) [Sentence: "So, you earn so much, yet you still want to 'cheat' others of their tickets {teasing him}? (laughs) Anyway, you should give me a treat since you have already saved on the free ticket you received."]

Figure 7.40b: Expectation of prior knowledge – level 2

The third layer of prior knowledge required tacit information which only personal friends in Ocean's inner circle owned. This constitutes the innermost layer of prior knowledge which the interactants probably had gathered through a longer period of time through personal and close offline interactions. Two examples are given in Figure 7.40c. In the first sample, Ocean had written about his success in making an interesting electrical device in a blog entry dated 21st Sept 2009. This prompted Yy to comment that he wished to change his academic course to the one Ocean was studying in. Ocean's (a.k.a. tc) reply in Figure 7.40c was based on his prior knowledge about Yy's lifelong dream of building an actual transformer. The exchanges between the two would not have made any sense to a reader who did not have previous knowledge of this information

(see Sample One in Figure 7.40c). Sample Two shows the comments in reference to the photographs Ocean posted of his friends on his blog. Ocean's (a.k.a. tc) response to sovin's comments would not make any sense to readers who do not have the 3rd level prior knowledge that his close and regular commentors had (see Sample Two in Figure 7.40c):-

Commentor	Quote	Explanation
Yy	ooo, so kool! i wanna change course dy… [210909]	1. ooo: **Interjection** (1st) 2. so kool: so cool (**Slang** – 1st) 3. i: I (**English** – 1st) 4. wanna: want to (**Slang** - 1st) 5. change course: **English** (1st) 6. dy: already (**CMC**) – 1st [Sentence: "Wow, that's really cool! Now you make me feel like changing my course of study."]
tc	no no no.. then i cannot see **transformer** liao.. [210909]	1. no no no.. then: **English** (1st) 2. i: I (**English**) – 1st 3. cannot see transformer: **English** (1st & **3rd**) 4. liao: already (**Hokkien**) – 1st [Sentence: "No no no.. {don't change course} or else I won't get to see {you build} the transformer {robot you said you'd build}." {Prior information: Making an actual transformer is Yy's dream and his studies in mechanical engineering is supposed to help him achieve that.}
sovin	walao eh i am so freakingly ulgy. can i post u a pic of mine to change tht picture ? [250408]	1. walao eh: Interjection in **Chinese** (1st) 2. i am so freakingly: **English** (1st) 3. ulgy: misspelling (**English**) – 1st 4. can i post: **English** (1st) 5. u: you (**CMC** – 1st) 6. a: **English** (1st) 7. pic: picture (**English short form**, **CMC**)1st 8. of mine to change: **English** (1st) 9. tht: that (**English short form**, **CMC**) 1st 10. picture: **English** (1st) [Sentence: "Oh my God! I look positively hideous {in the photo}. Can I post you a {better} picture of myself to replace that photo?"]

tc	very leng zai dy la.. no need la.. many gal wan ur number then said if they are **munchy biscuit** then only acceptable.. [250408]	1. very: English (1st) 2. leng zai: handsome guy (Cantonese) – 1st 3. dy: already (CMC) – 1st 4. la: non-English particle (1st) 5. no need: English (1st) 6. la: non-English particle (1st) 7. many: English (1st) 8. gal: English slang (1st) 9. wan ur: want your (CMC) – 1st 10. number then said if they are: English (1st) 11. munchy biscuit: a made-in-Malaysia biscuit brand, but referring to sovin's girlfriend whose name sounds like 'munchy' (3rd) 12. then only acceptable: English (1st) [Sentence: "You are already very handsome. So, you don't need {to send me your photo}. {As it is}, many girls asked {me} for your number, but I told them that only if they were 'munchy biscuit' would they be accepted {referring to sovin's girlfriend whose name sounded like the word 'munchy'}.]

Figure 7.40c: Expectation of prior knowledge – level 3

However, being in the innermost circle and having all the layers of prior information does not necessarily mean that the comments were meaningful to the interactants. There were times when their remarks were too obscure and cryptic even to those who were supposed to be able to understand them. Figure 7.40d shows two such examples:-

Commentor	Quote	Explanation
Joe	Come closer, lend me your ear, let me whisper. **The thing cleaning the other thing's ear**? [200408]	{Cannot be explained}
tc	**wat the thing**?? don so hamsap can onot...??	[Sentence: "What's the thing you're talking about? Can you not be so perverted?] Additional information: {There was no connection to it, but tc could only guess that it probably had something to do with vulgarity}

ufriin	ng mj's name can be **feytin.. feytin ng.. :)**	feytin: referring to words which sound similar in Cantonese. fey: sounds like 'flying' in Cantonese. tin: sounds like 'sky' in Cantonese ng: a Chinese surname which sounds like the number '5' in Cantonese. {ufriin was referring to a very old Cantonese show where a woman had 10 children with superhuman abilities, and Son no. 5's ability was flying.
tc	**feytin** is wat??	[Sentence: "What is feytin?"] {Because ufriin used such a remote reference, tc could not understand what he meant. The Cantonese show was such an old one that tc had never heard of it nor watched it.}

Figure 7.40d: Messages in comments which failed to be conveyed

There were also times when comments from unknown *commentors* were ignored or disregarded, especially if the comments were irrelevant or made no sense. In such cases, there was no attempt to engage the unknown persons to seek clarification on the comments, unlike those in Figure 7.40d which were made by known *commentors*. This supports the researcher's observation that Ocean used his blog not for extending his social network but for maintaining existing long-term friendships, especially those which had been forged offline. Through his blog, he kept in touch with friends who had departed for further studies abroad. The rich features in the communication sought to replicate and retain the features of the face-to-face oral interactions they used to have and this atmosphere in the blog provided them with the feeling of being physically together and having face-to-face oral intercourse.

7.3 Summary of Chapter Seven

This chapter has discussed the analysis of the communication which took place in Ocean's blog. It has shown that though the language of the blog is in English, Ocean and his *commentors* have used varieties of English and many other languages in both their original codes and Romanized ones as lexical and syntactic strategies. They have also used, amongst other types, non-standard orthography, emotive representations, and onomatopoeic words to create the desired atmosphere in the blog they participated in. As a result, the communication strategies have resulted in lively discussions and enriched their communication, allowing them to convey their messages in their entirety; messages which are conveyed not only because of the literal meaning of the words used but beyond that where the very choice of words, phrases, and syntactical structures conveys so much more.

Besides the choice of variety and of language expressing their Malaysian identity, they also show a high expectation of tacit or prior knowledge was required of the blog readers. That in itself shows that the discussions are somewhat coded, limiting 'outsiders' from understanding the interactions that took place within the blog, which although was a public platform, was largely meant for a private audience.

CHAPTER 8: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

8.0 Introduction

The present study seeks to discover and understand the blogging practices of young Malaysian bloggers as well as their choice of language and/or varieties of English in their blogs written mainly in English (see section 1.1). In order to do this, the social constructivist approach of engaging the social actors who contributed to the social phenomenon of blogging was necessary as knowledge and therefore all meaningful reality is a human product, socially and culturally constructed (Gredler, 1997; Ernest, 1998, both cited in Hartas, 2010). Individuals create meaning through social interaction (Prawat & Floden, 1994; Gredler, 1997; Newman, 2000, all cited in Sanderson, 2008) and the blogosphere is created through joint social action where amongst other features, there are writers and readers, and links which connect them to one another. Engaging the active participation of the social actors was vital for a richer yield of data and a more accurate analysis of it, and therefore, the practitioners of the online social media's inclusion began even before data collection commenced. They were engaged in two separate pilot studies to inform the research, each exploring a different angle of the current research to arrive at the most appropriate methods and procedures to carry it out, and they were involved even in the verification of analysed data stage.

Findings from the data as presented in Chapters 5, 6, and 7 therefore, reveal insights about their blogging practices (see sections 5.1.2 & 5.1.3), their attitude towards and perception of themselves as users of English (see sections 6.1.4, 6.2.3, 6.3.4, 6.4.4, 6.4.5.4 & 6.5.2) and how they operate their language(s) in blogging to express their communicative intentions (see sections 6.4.5.2, 6.4.5.3 & Chapter 7). The bloggers' narratives about their language background and use of language present to us their world as learners and users of English and help us understand their perception of the language and their language choices in blogging. This chapter discusses these revelations (blogging issues, identity issues, language issues, and other findings) as well as presents suggestions and ideas for further research in this area.

8.1 RQ1: What are the blogging practices of young Malaysian bloggers?

The findings revealed that the participants of this research did not spend excessive amounts of time on blogging even though it was a novel way of keeping a dairy or as an outlet for self-expression at the time the survey was carried out (see Figures 5.7 & 5.8). Blogging was a normal pastime activity for these young people that did not demand a lot of their waking hours. However, doing it consistently and regularly was not without effort as some of them reported that they ran out of ideas or simply did not know what to write, resorting to random writing where they blogged about nothing in particular just to keep their blogs updated (see Fig. 5.10).

The findings also revealed the two main reasons for starting and maintaining a blog, i.e., for self-expression and social interaction (see Figures 5.5 & 5.6). These support the findings of Nardi, Schiano, Gumbrecht, and Swartz (2004), Papacharissi (2004), and Trammell, Tarkowski, Hofmokl, and Sapp (2006). A small number of them were also using their blogs to practise and improve their writing, although not all of them specifically started their blogs for that purpose.

Despite blogging being an unregulated space where language and grammar is concerned, the bloggers in the present study were conscious of the need to create interesting styles of writing for their readers and to use good English, as would be the usual case in classroom writing (see Figure 5.12). When the bloggers drafted their blog entries and composed comments, they were in fact honing their writing skills, editing it for better readability (89.5% edited their writing and 73.7% were mindful of their writing) (see Figure 5.12). In reality then, the bloggers were practising their writing skills whilst indulging in an activity that they enjoyed. Blogging then, was "more than a "kid's game" or a diary for teenagers to express their angst" (Penrod, 2007:152).

The findings also showed that bloggers who started blogging because it was the newest activity and for social networking, abandoned their blogs after a while. When *Facebook* became more popular, they broke away from blogging, using *Facebook* instead for social networking. However, those who blogged for self-reflection or self-discovery tended to stick to

blogging while using *Facebook* and other CMC platforms at the same time for their networking functions.

The bloggers who received comments were more motivated to write because of the audience factor. Even a perceived audience was sufficient to keep them blogging (see section 6.3.5). As Brake (2009) observes, bloggers are aware of many real and potential readers, even though they often do not focus their attention on those who may be reading their postings or wonder who they are. That the bloggers in this study were mindful of what they wrote also shows their awareness of an audience and of a relationship with their readers, being concerned about how they would be perceived or judged through their blog writing, and therefore seeing their blogs as a reflection of themselves. They self-regulated their writing using the composing-editing-checking process before clicking on the 'publish' button.

These participants were careful about how they constructed their comments so as not to upset the recipients by their feedback although they also desire to comment truthfully (see Fig. 5.14), revealing an awareness of how their feedback would affect the recipients. This is reflective of a face-saving culture in Asian communities (Asma, 1996; Merriam & Mazanah, 2000) where direct confrontations are usually frowned upon, and *jaga air muka* (protecting one's image) and *jaga hati orang* (not intentionally hurt another's feelings) through words and actions is a usual practice. Asma (1996:106) identified 'face', or "maintaining a person's dignity by not embarrassing or humiliating him in front of others" as key to preserving

social harmony and personal relationships and one of the five values that are common to all Malaysian ethnic groups. This cultural value was reflected in the bloggers' commenting protocol and it supersedes advice from high profile bloggers' who insisted that bloggers must "say exactly what you want to say no matter what it looks like on the screen" (Pierce, 2004), and "write honestly, don't hide, and don't stop short" (Bernstein, 2002).

Citing spamming and unsolicited criticisms as unacceptable in blogging, the bloggers in this study showed a desire for healthy, peaceful exchanges in blogging which is achievable when bloggers practise self-regulation over what they write in their own blogs or comment in others'. The opportunity to have control over one's thoughts and emotions in writing which affect the well-being of another is not only a socially responsible action but one which brings about satisfaction to the doer and boosts self-esteem.

Findings from the pilot study also show the bloggers to be supportive of one another through positive feedback, an important aspect of growing up for young adults in this confusing world where positive feedback encourages improved learning (Draper, 2005; Reigel, 2005). As Maryam (2011) discovered in her study on acquiring literacy more effectively, blogging also allowed the children to write without fear.

8.2 RQ2: How are they using this medium of communication?

Blogs as an outlet for self-expression

Findings from the survey data revealed that the contents of the participants' blogs revolved around their personal life (see Figure 5.10) while examination of the interviewees' entries revealed the same pattern (see Figure 5.11). They wrote less on other topics such as the ICT, food, outdoor matters, entertainment, and events happening around them. This reinforces the idea of their blogs as personal diaries to record their thoughts and perceptions for self-reflection, since the survey findings recorded 82.4% of participants claiming to use blogs for self-expression and 58.8% for social interaction. For the bloggers who regularly received comments on their blogs, it was a place they went to for answers, for support, and for feedback on issues they faced in their offline lives.

From a psychological perspective, the blogging outlet is less damaging than vocal or violent physical manifestations of unhappiness as it allows the bloggers to express it without having to mention names. A creative piece is also produced when bloggers are able to revolve their writing around an issue which affected them. As Camin revealed in the interview with her:

> I begin to write more about Chinese value because at that time I was mad at a friend … because of her manner towards me. But I don't want to reveal the name … even in the blog, I don't want to reveal the name so I just put some significant thing, saying that you should be like this, you should be like this, instead of doing what you're not supposed to do.

This explains the Befrienders KL's decision to adopt the social media in their work to help others. As the organisation's chairman explained, "Expressing feelings on the (social media) is a form of emotional release that helps to reduce pain" (Tai, 2011 Nov 21 '*Befrienders taps Internet to help the suicide-prone*'). However, it is important to note that choosing the right social media platform for that purpose is important, citing a case of *Facebook* bullying amongst many others (The Guardian, 2013 Aug 6 *'Teenager Hannah Smith killed herself because of online bullying, says father'*). On the blogging platform, owners can exercise gatekeeper control by filtering comments before they appear publicly online.

Blogs to express deep emotions and personal affairs

The young Malaysian bloggers in the present study used their blogs in a variety of ways, most significantly as a catharsis to relieve emotional tensions and to help them make sense of the world around them as they blogged about real-life issues they faced. For some of them, blogging was like writing a 'Dear Aunt Agony' letter for advice and having an extended family of bloggers who dispensed advice and ideas. This method provided wider coverage of their problems for a longer period of time and advice could be received from more than one 'Aunt Agony'.

Although Rettberg (2008:116) opines that bloggers often avoid writing directly about their emotional and personal affairs, it was found in the present study that the blogs contained detailed personal matters and deeply expressed emotions which they probably would not express in face-to-face encounters with family and friends because of embarrassment

or probable loss of face if a negative reaction was received. The medium of blogging buffers the effect, saves face and preserves a person's self-pride.

Blogs to harness the 'mob power' effect

The interactive communication in the blogs in this study showed that blog owners also used their blogs to compel others to take action. Writing about their experience of other people's unacceptable behaviour, they allowed their readers to stress a point they made to induce action. For example, EC used his readers to compel his roommate to end his uncooperative behaviour by posting the perpetrator's anti-social behaviour, shaming him into changing his attitude. EC later removed the entry after the desired change was achieved. Sam wrote about her boyfriend's ungentlemanly behaviour, prompting her *commentors* to heap criticisms on him although it earned her insults as well. Using her blog readers to judge them both was her way of handling a thorny issue she could not manage on her own.

8.3 RQ3: How do they use English in their blogs?

With the varied language background that the younger generation of English-speaking Malaysian bloggers possess, how do they use English as the medium of communication in their blogs? The findings show that English was the main choice of the survey respondents for a specific reason. English was the language of CMC. In order for their blogs to receive greater exposure and greater readership in the blogosphere, they needed to use a language which was internationally understood. This

choice was also made by those who did not necessarily use English as their preferred language in other communications, acknowledging the status of English as an international language.

Although the bloggers in the present study blogged mainly in English, some of them also used other languages (i.e. Malay, Mandarin, Japanese, Korean) in their blog writing and blog communication with their *commentors*. However, these were few because it was technically more difficult to use other writing systems in blogs as they required the installation of special language software to compose the writing which was then copied into the blog template and published.

Choosing to use a certain language or a certain variety of English in their blogs was not simply a matter of preference. The bloggers used formal or standard English when they wanted their readers to take them seriously, such as when they blogged about general issues or serious matters of a non-personal nature. There was also the perception that readers who chanced upon their blogs would be more inclined to read the entries if they were written in an acceptable standard of English. Writings in bad English were also generally seen as less presentable.

The bloggers wrote in other languages in their original writing systems or Romanised forms, and intentionally used regional varieties of English and non-standard English when writing about other matters. They used their dominant language when writing about delicate matters which could be

subject to misinterpretation, for instance, Ocean who blogged in Mandarin when expressing his innermost feelings (see section 6.4.5.2).

Blogging in other languages was a way for Camin to protect her privacy in the blogosphere. She said, "because I don't like to share much of my personal life, so I'll put it in a more simple way, simple English. And also sometimes the words which I don't wish people to know, I'll put it in Chinese or maybe Korean words". She felt that using Romanised Chinese words or in Korean in her blog would limit the number of people who could understand the more private matter she was writing about.

In a multicultural society such as Malaysia, switching varieties is a frequent and instinctive strategy among the locals, used especially in face-to-face oral interactions. Ocean's blog was analysed to see how he and his blog interactants convey messages and whether his communicative intent was achieved through the manner in which he used language. The findings show a variety of communication strategies being used, amongst others, orthography, emotive representations, lexical strategies (using original codes from the source language(s), initialism, acronym, truncation, non-English particles) and syntactic strategies (go, then, one, already, also can, can also, last time, follow vs bring, and repositioning of wh-word in question form). There was also expectation of prior knowledge required of the blog readers. That itself shows that blog comments are somewhat coded, limiting 'outsiders' from understanding the interactions meant for a private audience whilst using a public platform.

Non-English particles especially in the comments section of the blog and ME syntactic features identify Ocean and his interactants as Malaysian users of English (see sections 7.1.3 and 7.1.4). This variety of English used in the blog communication was not necessarily a reflection of their command of English but a language strategy and pride in their Malaysian identity. They were proud of their ability to 'encode' their writing using the varieties of ME. Ocean's entries in English were written using SME while the interactive communication in the comments section of his blog was in CME and in texting orthography to foster a feeling of closeness which signified friendship and acceptance, to be at one with the other interlocutors, and to succinctly convey his communicative intentions without misinterpretation (see section 6.4.5.3). This was achieved by using unmistakable features of CME which were locally understood and which were typically more succinct but less grammatically coherent than SME.

The use of other languages in the interactive section of his blog was also because of pride in their ethnic identity. As Ocean explained the use of Romanised Chinese in the blog communication, he said, "we can speak Chinese what ... it's not necessary to speak in English, and Chinese we can understand more".

The choice of language style in the blog interactive communication also had a purpose. Although Ocean and his *commentors* avoided inappropriate English words in his blog and masked vulgar words using asterisks to minimise their unpleasant effect, name-calling in Chinese languages were liberally used and accepted. The derogatory labels they used on each

other in his blog did not create ill-feeling but were instead seen as light-hearted name-calling, creating the closeness they had with one another offline. Far from it being impolite, it was a bonding strategy. Although the blog was essentially Ocean's, there was a tacit understanding of what sort of language was permitted to use among the interactants and what was not. Usage of the different languages, different varieties and mix of words are therefore intentional and intuitive strategies which did not only convey the literal and overt messages but also the unseen emotive messages. The data which emerged from the analysis of his blog showed a strong case for the use of ME features as a strategy to achieve his communicative intent (see sections 7.1.3 and 7.1.4).

Understanding how multilingual young Malaysians use the different varieties of Malaysian English and other languages in their repertoire in their blogs contributes to knowledge in the field of blogging, of identity and of English varieties.

8.4 Other Findings

Privacy Issues and Safety

The Malaysian female blog owners were more cautious of being contacted by unknown *commentors* in their blogs. Although research involving more female Malaysian bloggers needs to be conducted to establish this gender trait, the female participants in this study who were contacted for further involvement were wary of their *commentors,* being cautious about disclosing too much personal details on their blog or meeting up face-to-

face. Attempts to meet up with them were more difficult although they had initially agreed to be contacted. Part of the reason could be a concern for personal safety. Limau finally agreed to a short face-to-face encounter at her home after a succession of e-mail interviews, while a face-to-face interview with Camin took place after a number of e-mail correspondences, at a very safe location which enabled her to confirm my identity. During the meeting, she also took a phone call from a family member to confirm that she had reached her intended destination safely and that she was fine.

A perceived threat from readers was a main reason to keep personal details out of their blogs. Camin, a female blogger who had very little personal identifying information on her blog, felt the need to be in control of her blog and the ability to protect it. "I would like to share everything which happens in my life, in my blog. But sometimes I'm afraid … those who hate me, those who don't like me, they'll try to destroy my blog, in a sense of giving nonsense, giving negative comments …", she said. She also wanted to be able to track down a *commentor* by allowing only those with a blog ID to post comments to her blog, saying "if there's anything, I can track out who it was". This perception of control and autonomy is found among Brake's (2009) interviewees but Brake found that they rarely exercised that control, feeling the duty to extend to others the same freedom of speech they enjoyed (Brake, 2009). Future research needs to be conducted to discover how female blogger-*commentor* relationship works in the Malaysian blogosphere.

Although male bloggers who were interviewed in the study allowed anyone to place comments on their blogs, they also discreetly checked out anonymous *commentors* to determine if they were random strangers or people known to them offline. Ocean's way of verifying his *commentors'* identity was by replying to the comment using tacit words or language which only people in his circle would understand.

Besides being cautious about *commentors* and about being contacted, the Malaysian bloggers in the study also understood the dangers of exposing their personal details online. Yet, there was a desire to mark their blog with their identity. This conflict was revealed by Camin who wrote, "I won't post much of my pictures here. After all, this is an open blog" (May, 2008), but used her real surname and a Korean translation of her name on her blog, explaining that "I want people to know it's mine … because of (the surname), and because I have a perception that when people talk about (the surname), they'll think of me … so everywhere I go, I will try to put (the surname)". This conflict was also seen in her blog writing, where on one hand, she wanted to express personal matters on her blog yet on the other, did not want it to be understood by readers. Her method was to blog in a less understood language, saying "I like to put (it in the blog) but I don't like people to know ... at least it would minimise the number of people knowing it". This implies her acknowledgement of English as a widely known language.

Ocean too, had an unwritten rule of holding back his real emotions in his blog writing, saying "even when I write in Chinese ... when it's too private,

I won't reveal it as well" and "I am scared to expose my own identity, my own things. That's why I don't dare to write those things". Yet, he displayed his real name at the end of his blog homepage and posted his personal photographs in his blog. He had also declared that his blog was an open diary where anyone who read it would learn about his life (see section 6.4.5). Even so, he was cautious about revealing true feelings about matters close to his heart. Simply, the blogger-participants could be placed into three categories where revelation of their real identity was concerned; the bold who declared all (Ezdude, EC, and Jeff), the partially private (Cucumber, Ocean, and Limau), and the rather private (Camin).

Perception of the Ownership of English and Attitude towards the Use of English

English is now seen as an Asian language, with many countries especially India and China using English to connect to the global economy, and former colonized Asian countries "exploiting their anglophone heritage to attract offshore contracts" (Graddol, 2006:94).

Among the blogger-participants, their perception of the ownership of English is that it does not matter who owns English but how they are using it to achieve communicative intentions. To a certain extent, the bloggers' perception of themselves in relation to their ethnicity, identity, and their employment of English affected their attitude towards their use of English. This was reflected in the choice of language and the choice of variety of

English used in their blogs which were written mainly in English but which also featured entries and comments written in other languages. They demonstrated their ability to manipulate and adapt the languages they know because of their individual language learning background, shifting up or down the continuum of English varieties with different interlocutors to achieve maximum effectiveness in the communication. The findings also show that the bloggers were proud of the distinctive ME varieties they used which is a distinctively Malaysian identity arising from the mix of the multi-ethnic L1 features into English. Nevertheless, there is a general awareness of the colloquial varieties not being suitable for use in certain platforms, and this is reflected in the clear difference of ME variety used in their blog entry from the one used in the communicative section of their blog. They perceived blog entries written in informal varieties of English as less professional and less appealing.

Perception of Language as part of Ethnic Identity

By interacting with the bloggers through e-mails and interviews, the researcher was able to elicit the following information. Bloggers whose dominant language was not English reported that they felt strongly about their ethnic language as part of their heritage. It could be that the strong cultural ties to their ethnicity were forged during the learning of their ethnic language at a young age. On the other hand, those who did not know their ethnic language felt inadequate and embarrassed by this lack. This is exacerbated by the perception of the older Malaysian Chinese generation who sees knowledge of one's ethnic language as proof of

membership and therefore not knowing it is forgetting one's roots and a disgrace. However, the blogger-participants who were fluent in English and who used mainly English in their daily transactions did not seem to be affected by their ignorance of their ethnic language, presumably because it did not handicap them (see Chapter Six).

Those who had an early exposure to and proficient in the languages also seemed to be more open towards the cultures of those languages, seeing the cultural values as a benefit and not a threat to their own culture. Being more open to the cultures also seemed to influence their ability to master the language. There is a possibility that perhaps this 'closed' perception of English might have hindered them from achieving a higher proficiency in English than they desired. It could be that a part of them resisted for fear of losing their ethnic identity or of being seen as having forgotten their roots. However, these are non-conclusive observations which would need a larger corpus to study on.

Awareness of Own Language Learning Journey

Some observations made about the blogger-participants during the interviews revealed some pertinent information. The L2 blogger-participants who had to work hard to obtain the level of proficiency in English they have today, seemed to be more aware about their language learning journey and were more observant about the languages that were used around them. For example, Ocean was able to relate with ease and with detailed clarity about his language experiences during his primary and secondary education, as though it had just happened a while ago,

likewise Camin and Limau. However, Jeff and Ezdude who spoke English fluently had more difficulty remembering their language learning journey, especially details of it when they were younger. They also tended to be less aware of how they had acquired the language. Jeff actually had to think very hard about it and was not absolutely sure what language his father used when communicating with his mother! Likewise, Ezdude was not able to share his language learning experiences because he was not sure how he had acquired it. His parents were the ones who filled in the blanks when interviewed. Probably, the more difficult one's language learning journey is, the more unforgettable it is.

Based on the narratives provided by most of the blogger-participants, some conclusions could be made about their language learning efforts. Efforts to improve their proficiency were not solely dependent on their awareness of the importance of English but on having a conducive and encouraging environment and an object of interest as well. Learning was quicker and more successful when there were more opportunities for practice.

Benefits Derived from Their Blogging Experience

All the blogger-participants acknowledged that blogging had helped them improve their writing in English. They were using more complete sentences when writing on other platforms after having started blogging, they were more aware of the choices of words they could use, and how others would view their blog writing. Just like the findings of Mariati et al's (2010) writing class project for undergraduates in a Malaysian university,

blogging improves students' writing skills, not just through the writing practice itself but also activities involved in blogging, such as reading peers' blog posts.

In the present study, Ezdude consciously edited his writing for language mistakes before posting, saying that it gave him the chance to practise his writing. His reflections on the contents of his blog entries helped him work out thoughts about his life and actions he could take to become a better person (see section 6.1.5).

Ocean, who had started his blog to improve his English, said that blogging helped him improve his writing because it forced him to construct, edit, and be more careful with his grammar before sending the entries into the blogosphere. He also learnt from his readers' comments about his writing and received encouragement and advice to handle problems which he faced in his offline life. (6.4.5). Limau too, was happier and more optimistic after blogging, which she used to express frustrations and release pressure in life (see section 6.3.5.2). Although she initially faced difficulty in getting her ideas to flow, she felt that she was able to write with more ease after three years of blogging had contributed to a larger word bank at her fingertips. She also realised that she was now able to produce longer entries and did not have to edit her writing as much. EC used his blog as a soundboard to obtain feedback on his opinion and actions, while Sam used her blog to obtain perspectives on situations she was in. Issues which they faced were real issues which young adults grapple with everywhere in the world. Blogs gave them an outlet to express their uncertainties in life and

doubts about themselves, perhaps averting an implosion of suppressed emotions.

Besides the above, they also indirectly benefited in other ways. In his social theory of learning, Wenger (2009:214) explains that "learning is an integral part of our everyday lives". It is a fundamentally social phenomenon that takes place in the context of our lived experience of participation in the world. As members of the blogosphere, the bloggers were constantly learning from one another simply by being social creatures, participating in and contributing to the social communities to which they belong. Engaging these social actors in the current research and allowing them to tell their stories from their perspectives contributed to knowledge of the Malaysian blogosphere monopolised by young Malaysians.

8.5 The Social Media of Malaysia today and Suggestions for Further Research

The present study which involved the active participation of social actors of the media helps us understand the blogging habits of young Malaysians and how these multilingual Malaysians use the languages and varieties of Malaysian English in their repertoire as a social device to achieve communicative intent in their blog communication. Amongst other findings, it showed us that underlying the use of languages was their conceptualisation of their identity. However, this study is limited to just a

group of young Malaysian bloggers in their tertiary education and whose readers were mainly friends they knew offline. There is, therefore, potential for further research on the use of English in the blogs of Malaysians from different age groups and on different categories of bloggers, for example, the blogs of celebrities or political bloggers to see what issues will emerge from the data. Furthermore, if there are findings on the use of English by young bloggers all over the world, these can be compared against the findings of the current research to ascertain similarities or differences in the way identity and individuality are expressed, and in the language features used.

Although blogging was *the* medium of online social interaction at the commencement of the current research, the scenario has changed with young Malaysians currently engaging more in other social networking sites, with *Facebook* leading the way. *We Are Social*'s latest report, 'Digital in 2016' (Kemp, 2016), shows that 59% of Malaysians are social media users (18 million), with Malaysia's top ten social active platforms being *Facebook* (41%), *Whatsapp* (39%), *Facebook Messenger* (33%), *Google+* (23%), *Wechat* (23%), *Instagram* (22%), *Line* (17%), *Twitter* (16%), *Skype* (13%), and *LinkedIn* (11%). The reports were based on a survey of Internet users aged 16-64. *Myspace* or other blogging platforms were not reported in the list of social active platforms and if they were included at all, they would have contributed less than 11%. A clearer picture of the current state of blogging in Malaysia could perhaps be seen in MCMC's 'Internet Users Survey 2014' (Multimedia Communications Malaysia Commission,

2015) report which showed that only 3.1% of *Facebookers* who use alternative social media, have accounts in the blogging platform of *Myspace*, compared to Facebookers who also have *Instagram* (30.3%), *Twitter* (22.7%), *Google+* (14.2%), *Foursquare* (4.0%), *LinkedIn* (3.7%), *Tumblr* (2.1%), and others (5.9%).

Since other social networking platforms are the current trend now and some research on the language used on the platforms has been conducted, these could be compared against the findings of the present study. Further language research can also be conducted on newer social networking platforms such as *Snapchat* or *WeChat*, and again be compared to the findings of the present study. All these suggested studies should engage the relevant social actors to inform the study as their participation is vital for the credibility and reliability of the resulting findings, as revealed in the current study. This study has contributed to the body of knowledge on language use in social media, the current and popular mode of social interaction among the young.

8.6 Conclusion

This study focussed on young Malaysian bloggers between 18 to 25 years old, who had completed their formative education in school and at the time of the research, were either waiting for their A-level results, were college/university students or had just completed their university education. The study looked at this group of Malaysians whose language learning and language use experiences were subject to post-colonial

influences such as issues in identity, changes in language policy and their perception and reality of the importance of English for educational purposes and for their future.

Their blogging activities have shown both similarities to and differences from other bloggers of the same age group around the world; similarities especially in the way they use their blogs to express themselves and manage issues faced offline, and differences especially in the choice of language and varieties of English in their blog writing and blog communication.

Using the social constructivist approach, where knowledge is seen as a "human product that is socially and culturally constructed" (Hartas, 2010:44), the bloggers were directly engaged in the study to reveal their perception of themselves as Malaysian users of English, their perception of the ME varieties, and their idea of how people perceive their blogs through the variety of English used in their blogs, which determine to a large extent how they use English in their blogs. The multicultural, multi-ethnic and multilingual background with colonial influences which produced the rich varieties of ME today can be seen in the blogs of those who are proud of these varieties. As Rajadurai (2004:54) aptly puts it, "there is a growing sense of pride and affinity associated with this localised variety of English ... particularly of its spoken form ... where one's identity is most clearly implicated" and that "colloquial ME is often the preferred choice, as a sign of solidarity and camaraderie, even for speakers who are highly proficient in standard English".

The way Ocean blogged and they way he and his *commentors* communicated in his blog did not comply with the conventions of traditional writing. Rather, it was a type of writing which was oral in nature. The nuances of utterances, the inflections, stress, and intonation were represented using non-conventional use of punctuations, grammar, and non-English words or phrases which were understood by his regular *commentors* and readers. It brought alive the written conversation, as though he and his interactants were conversing orally.

The blogs provided a way for the ME varieties as rich varieties of postcolonial English to receive greater exposure through the blogosphere. When the lexicon and phrases of these varieties which convey rich cultural connotations are accepted as varieties of English, used, and disseminated, the English language vocabulary is further expanded.

REFERENCES

"acronym". (2010). Merriam-Webster Inc.

The Chinese Language. (n.d.). 2014, Mar 29, from http://www.chinalanguage.com

"commenter" (Publication. (2010). Retrieved 2010, Jul 12, from Farlex, Inc.: http://www.thefreedictionary.com/commenter

"kiasu" (Publication. (n.d.). Retrieved 2012, Aug 31, from Oxford University Press: http://oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/kiasu

Achebe, C. (1976). The African Writer and The English Language. In *Morning Yet on Creation Day*. New York: Doubleday.

Adenekan, S. (2005, Jan 23). Academics Give Lessons on Blogs. Retrieved January 15, 2008, from http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/education/4194669.stm

Anderson, B. (1991). *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (2nd ed.). London & New York: Verso.

Anie Atan. (1998). *English in Industry: A Study of Language Choice in Two Electronics Firms in Malaysia.* Unpublished dissertation, University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur.

Asma Abdullah. (1996). *Going Glocal: Cultural Dimensions in Malaysian Management*. Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia: Malaysian Institute of Management.

Asmah Haji Omar. (1992). *The Linguistic Scenery in Malaysia*. Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka.

Asmah Haji Omar. (1993). *Language and Society in Malaysia* (2nd ed.). Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka.

Asmah Haji Omar. (2000). From Imperialism to Malaysianisation: A Discussion of the Path Taken by English Towards Becoming a Malaysian Language. In Halimah Mohd Said & K. S. Ng (Eds.), *English is an Asian Language: The Malaysian Context* (pp. 12-21). Kuala Lumpur: Persatuan Bahasa Moden & The Macquarie Library Pty. Ltd.

Azirah Hashim. (2002). Culture and Identity in the English Discourses of Malaysians. In A. Kirkpatrick (Ed.), *Englishes in Asia: Communication, Identity, Power and Education* (pp. 75-93). Australia: Language Australia Ltd.

Azirah Hashim, & Norizah Hassan (Eds.). (2006). *Varieties of English in Southeast Asia and Beyond*. Kuala Lumpur: University of Malaya Press.

Banton, M. (1965). *Roles*. New York: Basic Books.

Baskaran, L. M. (1987). Aspects of Malaysian English Syntax. Unpublished Doctoral thesis. University College, University of London.

Baskaran, L. M. (2005). *A Malaysian English Primer: Aspects of Malaysian English Features*. Kuala Lumpur: University of Malaya Press.

Bauman, Z. (1991). *Modernity and Ambivalence*. Cambridge: Polity.

Berger, P. L., & Luckmann, T. (1966). *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge*. New York: Anchor Books, Random House, Inc.

Bernstein, M. (2002, Aug 16). 10 Tips on Writing the Living Web (Article 149). *A List Apart*, 31 Jan 2012, from http://www.alistapart.com/articles/writeliving/

Berthold, M., Mangubhai, F., & Batorowicz, K. (1997). *Bilingualism & Multiculturalism: Study Book*. Toowoomba, QLD.: Distance Education Centre, University of Southern Queensland.

BFM 89.9. (2011). Manglish: Malaysian English at its Wackiest. An Interview with Professor Dr Lee Su Kim (author).

Bhabha, H. (1994). *The Location of Culture*. London & New York: Routledge.

Bhela, B. (1999). Native Language Interference in Learning a Second Language: Exploratory Case Studies of Native Language Interference with Target Language Usage. *International Education Journal, 1*(1), 22-31.

Bickerton, D. (1973). The Nature of a Creole Continuum. *Language, 49*, 640-649.

Billig, M. (1995). *Banal Nationalism*. London: Sage.

Block, D. (2006b). Identity in Applied Linguistics. In T. Omoniyi & G. White (Eds.), *The Sociolinguistics of Identity* (pp. 34-49). London: Continuum.

Block, D. (2006a). *Multilingual Identities in a Global City: London Stories*. London: Palgrave.

Blood, R. (2003). Ten Tips for a Better Weblog. *Rebecca's Pocket*, from http://www.rebeccablood.net/essays/ten_tips.html

Blood, R. (2000, Sept 7). Weblogs: A History and Perspective. Retrieved 31 Dec 2003, from http://www.rebeccablood.net/essays/weblog_history.html

Blood, R. (2002c). Weblogs: A History and Perspective. In J. Rodzvilla (Ed.), *We've Got Blog: How Weblogs are Changing our Culture* (pp. 7-16). Cambridge, MA: Perseus Publishing.

Bokamba, E. (1989). Are There Syntactic Constraints on Code-Mixing? *World Englishes, 8*(3), 277-292.

Bosire, M. (2006). Immigrant Identity: Code switching among Kenyans in Upstate New York. In J. Mugane, J. P. Hutchison & D. A. Worman (Eds.), *Selected Proceedings of the 35th Annual Conference on African Linguistics: African Languages and Linguistics in Broad Perspectives* (pp. 44-52). Somerville, MA: Cascadilla Proceedings Project.

boyd, d., & Marwick, A. E. (2011). *Social Privacy in Networked Publics: Teens' Attitudes, Practices, and Strategies*. Paper presented at the A Decade in Internet Time: Symposium on the Dynamics of the Internet and Society. Retrieved 2013, Jul 02, from http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=1925128

Brake, D. R. (2009). 'As if nobody's reading'?: The Imagined Audience and Socio-Technical Biases in Personal Blogging Practice in the UK. Unpublished PhD dissertation. Department of Media and Communications, The London School of Economics and Political Science.

Byrne, M. M. (2001). Understanding Life Experiences through a Phenomenological Approach to Research [Electronic Version]. *AORN Journal*. Retrieved 12 April 2010, from http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m0FSL/is_4_73/ai_73308177/

Canagarajah, S. (1999). *Resisting Linguistic Imperialism in English Teaching*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Chadwick-Dias, A., Tedesco, D., & Tullis, T. (2004). *Demographic Differences in Preferred Web Site Content*. Paper presented at the Aging By Design 2004. Retrieved 2008, May 29, from citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.88.2402&rep=rep1&type=pdf

Ch'ien, E. (2008). English is getting wierder, and so R wee. *English Today 94, 24*(2), 50-55.

CIA World Factbook. (2011). *East and Southeast Asia: Malaysia*. Retrieved 2011, Mar 24. from https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/my.html.

CIA World Factbook. (2015). *East and Southeast Asia: Malaysia*. Retrieved 11 August, 2015. from https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/my.html.

Clandinin, D. J., & Connelly, F. M. (2000). *Narrative Inquiry: Experience and Story in Qualitative Research*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.

Clark, J. (2002). Deconstructing "You've Got Blog". In *We've Got Blog: How Weblogs are Changing our Culture* (pp. 57-68). Cambridge, MA.: Perseus Publishing.

Cohen, D., & Crabtree, B. (2006). The Positivist Paradigm. *Qualitative Research Guidelines Project*, 2013, Jul 08, from http://www.qualres.org/HomePosi-3515.html

Commissioner of Law Revision. (2009). *Federal Constitution of Malaysia*. Retrieved 28 Nov 2010. from http://www.jac.gov.my/jac/images/stories/akta/federalconstitution.pdf.

Cook, V. (1991). *Second Language Learning and Language Teaching*. London: Edward Arnold.

Crotty, M. J. (1998). *The Foundations of Social Research: Meaning and Perspective in the Research Process*. London. Thousand Oaks. New Delhi: Sage Publications.

Crystal, D. (2001). *English and the Internet*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Crystal, D. (2001). *Language and the Internet*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Crystal, D. (2003). *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of the English Language* (2nd ed.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Crystal, D. (2010). *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of Language* (3rd ed.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Czarniawska, B. (2004). *Narratives in Social Science Research*. London: Sage Publications Ltd.

David, M. K. (2000). The Language of Malaysian Youth: An Exploratory Study. In Halimah Mohd Said & K. S. Ng (Eds.), *English is an Asian Language: The Malaysian Context* (pp. 64-72). Kuala Lumpur: Persatuan Bahasa Moden & The Macquarie Library Pty. Ltd.

David, M. K., & Faridah Noor Mohd Noor. (1999). Language Maintenance or Language Shift in the Portuguese Settlement of Malacca in Malaysia? *Migracijske Teme 15*(4), 465-482.

David, M. K., Naji, I., & Kaur, S. (2003). Language Maintenance or Language Shift among the Punjabi Sikh Community in Malaysia? *International Journal Sociology of Language, 161*, 1-24.

Davies, A. (2003). *The Native Speaker: Myth and Reality*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.

Davis, A. (2006). A Place to be Heard. Retrieved 9 Dec 2007, from http://www97.intel.com/education/odyssey/day_300/day_300.htm

Deterding, D., & Kirkpatrick, A. (2006). Emerging South-East Asian Englishes and Intelligibility. *World Englishes, 25*(3/4), 391-409.

Dornyei, Z. (1994). Motivation and Motivating in the Foreign Language Classroom Author(s). *The Modern Language Journal, 78*(3), 273-284.

Dr. Crazy. (2006, Jan 04). Endings, Beginnings. *The Chronicles of Dr. Crazy.* Retrieved 6 Sept, 2011, from http://crazyphd.blogspot.com/

Draper, S. W. (2005). Feedback: A Technical Memo [Electronic Version]. Retrieved 2013, Aug 01, from http://www.psy.gla.ac.uk/~steve/feedback.html

D'Souza, J. (1993). Varieties of English Old and New: a Matter of Standards. In A. Pakir (Ed.), *The English Language in Singapore: Standards and Norms* (pp. 32-46). Singapore: UniPress.

Dunbar, R. (1996). *Grooming, Gossip, and the Evolution of Language*. London & Boston: Faber & Faber.

Dunbar, R. (2011). *Grooming, Gossip, and the Evolution of Language (Kindle Edition)*: Faber & Faber Non-fiction. Amazon Media EU s.a.r.l. .

Duran, L. (1994). Toward a Better Understanding of Code Switching and Interlanguage in Bilinguality: Implications for Bilingual Instruction. *The Journal of Educational Issues of Language Minority Students, 14*, 69-88.

Edwards, R. (2009, June 17). Bloggers do not have the right to keep their identities secret, High Court rules (Publication. Retrieved 2014, Mar 25: http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/law-and-order/5552019/Bloggers-do-not-have-the-right-keep-their-identities-secret-High-Court-rules.html

EF Education First. (2011). EF English Proficiency Index. Retrieved 6 April 2011 from http://www.ef.com/epi/ef-epi-ranking/

Erikson, E. H. (1950). *Childhood and Society*. New York: Norton.

Fadillah Merican. (2000). Going Native and Staying Strong: Malaysian Fiction in English. In Halimah Mohd Said & K. S. Ng (Eds.), *English is an Asian language: the Malaysian context* (pp. 107-124). Kuala Lumpur: Persatuan Bahasa Moden & The Macquarie Library Pty. Ltd.

Faulkner, S. L., & Hecht, M. L. (2007). Tides in the Ocean: A Layered Approach to Culture and Communication. In B. B. Whaley & W. Samter (Eds.), *Explaining Communication: Contemporary Theories and Exemplars* (pp. 393-402). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Firth, J. R. (1957). Personality and Language in Society. In *Papers in Linguistics* (Vol. 1934-1951, pp. 177-189). London: Oxford University Press.

Fish, S. (1980). *Is There a Text in This Class?* Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

frodonet. (2009, Feb 12). Manglish maybe your culture...But it's not mine. *The Star Online*. Retrieved 12 Feb 2009, from http://blog.thestar.com.my/permalink.asp?id=21294

Garfinkel, H. (1967). *Studies in Ethnomethodology*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Gaudart, H. (2000). Malaysian English, can or not? In Halimah Mohd Said & K. S. Ng (Eds.), *English is an Asian language: the Malaysian context* (pp. 47-56). Kuala Lumpur: Persatuan Bahasa Moden & The Macquarie Library Pty. Ltd.

Giddens, A. (1991). *Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age*. Cambridge: Polity.

Giles, H., & Baker, S. C. (2008). *Communication Accommodation Theory*. Retrieved 2010, Dec 08, from http://www.blackwellreference.com/public/tocnode?id=g9781405131995_chunk_g978

Giles, H., & Clair, R. (1979). *Language and Social Psychology*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Giles, H., Coupland, N., & Coupland, J. (1991). Accommodation Theory: Communication, Context, and Consequence. *Contexts of Accommodation: Developments in Applied Sociolinguistics*, 1-68.

Giles, H., & Powesland, P. F. (1975). *Speech Evaluation and Social Evaluation*. London: Academic Press.

Giles, H., Taylor, D. M., & Bourhis, R. Y. (1973). Towards a Theory of Interpersonal Accommodation through Language: Some Canadian Data. *Language in Society, 2*, 177-192.

Gill, S. K. (2002a). *International Communication: English Language Challenges for Malaysia*. Serdang: Universiti Putra Malaysia.

Glaser, B. G. (1978). *Theoretical Sensitivity: Advances in the Methodology of Grounded Theory*. Mill Valley, California: Sociology Press.

Goddard, C. (1994). The Meaning of lah: Understanding 'Emphasis' in Malay (Bahasa Melayu). *Oceanic Linguistics, 33*(1), 145-165.

Goffman, E. (1967). *Interaction Ritual. Essays on Face-to-Face Behavior*. New York: Anchor.

Gonzalez, A. (2000). Keynote address: Post-colonial Varieties of English in Search of a Methodology. In Halimah Mohd Said & K. S. Ng (Eds.), *English is an Asian language: the Malaysian context* (pp. 1-11). Kuala Lumpur: Persatuan Bahasa Moden & The Macquarie Library Pty. Ltd.

Govindan, I. V. P., & Pillai, S. (2009). English Question Forms Used by Young Malaysian Indians. *The English Teacher, XXXVIII*, 74-79.

Graddol, D. (2000). *The Future of English? A Guide to Forecasting the Popularity of the English Language in the 21st Century*. Retrieved 7 Jan 2011, from http://www.britishcouncil.org/learning-elt-future.pdf

Graddol, D. (2006). *English Next: Why Global English May Mean the End of 'English as a Foreign Language'*. U.K.: British Council.

Graff, M. (2005). Individual Differences in Hypertext Browsing Strategies. *Behaviour & Information Technology, 24*(2), 93-99.

Grahame, M., Laberge, J., & Scialfa, C. T. (2004). Age Differences in Search of Web Pages: The Effects of Link Size, Link Number, and Clutter. *Human Factors: The Journal of the Human Factors and Ergonomics Society, 46*(3), 385-394.

Grotevant, H. D. (1998). Adolescent Development in Family Contexts. In W. Damon & N. Eisenberg (Eds.), *Handbook of Child Psychology* (5th ed., Vol. 3: Social, Emotional, and Personality Development, pp. 1097-1149). New York: Wiley.

Gumperz, J. J. (1972). *Directions in Sociolinguistics: the Ethnography of Communication*. New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston.

Gumperz, J. J. (1982). *Discourse Strategies*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Gumperz, J. J. (1976b). The Sociolinguistic Significance of Conversational Code-switching. In J. J. Gumperz & J. Cook-Gumperz (Eds.), *Papers on Language and Context*. Working Paper No. 46. Language Behaviour Research Laboratory, Berkeley, Cal. Berkeley: University of California.

Halavais, A. (2002). Blogs and the "Social Weather". *Maastricht, The Netherlands: Internet Research 3.0.*

Hall, S. (1996). The Question of Cultural Identity. In S. Hall, D. Held, D. Hubert & K. Thompson (Eds.), *Modernity: an Introduction to Modern Societies*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Halliday, M. A. K. (1994). *An Introduction to Functional Grammar* (2nd ed.). London: Edward Arnold.

Hamida Beebi Abdul Karim. (1985). Malaysian English: Is It a Variety or a Dialect of British English? Unpublished paper. RELC, Singapore.

Harding, S., & Hintikka, M. (1983). *Discovering Reality*. Dordrecht: D. Reidel.

Hartas, D. (2010). The Epistemological Context of Quantitative and Qualitative Research. In D. Hartas (Ed.), *Educational Research and Inquiry: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches* (pp. 33-53). London: Continuum International Publishing Group.

Havighurst, R. (1972). *Developmental Tasks and Education (3rd ed.)*. New York: D. McKay Co.

Hecht, M. L., Jackson II, R. L., & Ribeau, S. A. (2003). *African American Communication: Exploring Identity and Culture* (2nd ed.). New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.

Heidegger, M. (1927/1962). *Being and Time*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Heidegger, M. (1962). *Being and Time*. New York, NY: Harper & Row.

Herring, S. C. (2000). Gender Differences in CMC: Findings and Implications. *Computer Professionals for Social Responsibility Journal, 18*(1).

Herring, S. C. (2002). Computer-mediated Communication on the Internet. *Annual Review of Information Science and Technology, 36*(1), 109-168.

Herring, S. C., Kouper, I., Scheidt, L. A., & Wright, E. L. (2004). Women and Children Last: The Discursive Construction of Weblogs [Electronic Version]. *Into the Blogosphere: Rhetoric, Community, and Culture of Weblogs*. Retrieved 23 Nov 2007, from http://blog.lib.umn.edu/blogosphere/women_and_children.html

Herring, S. C., & Paolillo, J. C. (2006). Gender and Genre Variation in Weblogs. *Journal of Sociolinguistics, 10*(4), 439-459.

Herring, S. C., Scheidt, L. A., Bonus, S., & Wright, E. L. (2004). Bridging the Gap: A Genre Analysis of Weblogs. *Proceedings of the 37th Annual Hawaii International Conference on System Sciences (HICSS'04) - Track 4 /2004*.

Herring, S. C., Scheidt, L. A., Bonus, S., & Wright, E. L. (2005). Weblogs as a Bridging Genre. *Information, Technology & People, 18*(2), 142-171.

Hickey, D. J. (1992). *Developing a Written Voice*: Mayfield Publishing Company.

Hiles, D. (2007). Identity Positioning: Narrative Analysis of Sjuzet and Fabula. In *Narrative and Memory* (pp. 33-41).

Hiles, D. R., Cermák, I., & Chrz, V. (2009). Narrative Oriented Inquiry: A Dynamic Framework for Good Practice. In D. Robinson, P. Fisher, T. Yeadon-Lee, S. J. Robinson & P. Woodcock (Eds.), *Narrative and Memory*. Huddersfield: University of Huddersfield Press.

Hogg, M. A., & Vaughan, G. M. (2002). *Social Psychology* (3rd ed.). London: Prentice Hall.

Hopkins, J. (2011). How Many Malaysian Blogs Are There? Retrieved 24 Mar 2011, from http://julianhopkins.net/index.php?/archives/293-How-many-Malaysian-blogs-are-there...

Hourihan, M. (2002, June 13). What We're Doing when We Blog [Electronic Version]. *Web DevCenter*. Retrieved 2011, June 06, from http://www.oreillynet.com/lpt/a/2474

Huffaker, D. A., & Calvert, S. L. (2005). Gender, Identity, and Language Use in Teenage Blogs. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication, 10*(2), article 1.

Hutchings, M. (2002). Computer Mediated Communication: Impact on Learning. In S. Fallows & R. Bhanot (Eds.), *Educational Development Through Information and Communications Technology* (pp. 87-100). London: Kogan Page.

IndexMundi. (2011a). Malaysia Internet Users 2009. Retrieved 24 Mar 2011, from http://www.indexmundi.com/malaysia/internet_users.html

IndexMundi. (2011b). Malaysia Population: Demographics. Retrieved 24 Mar 2011, from http://www.indexmundi.com/malaysia/population.html

Jenkins, J. (2003). *World Englishes: a resource book for students*. London & New York: Routledge.

Joseph, J. E. (2004). *Language and Identity: National, Ethnic, Religious*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Joseph, J. E. (2010). Identity. In C. Llamas & D. Watt (Eds.), *Language and Identities* (pp. 9-17). Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Kachru, B. B. (Ed.). (1992). *The Other Tongue: English across Cultures* (2nd ed.). Urbana, Chicago: University of Illinois Press.

Kawaura, Y., Kawakami, Y., & Yamashita, K. (1998). Keeping a Diary in Cyberspace. *Japanese Psychological Research, 40*(4), 234-245.

Kawaura, Y., Yamashita, K., & Kawakami, Y. (1999). What Makes People Keep Writing Web Diaries?: Self-expression in Cyberspace [In Japanese]. *Japanese Journal of Social Psychology, 14*(3), 133-143.

Kemp, S. (2016, Jan 27). Digital in 2016 [Electronic Version]. *We are Social*. Retrieved 2016, April 24, from http://wearesocial.com/special-reports/digital-in-2016

Kirkpatrick, A. (2000). *English as an Asian Language: Implications for the English Language Curriculum.* Paper presented at the English in Southeast Asia 99. Proceedings of the Fourth 'English in Southeast Asia', National Institute of Education, Singapore.

Koo, Y. L. (2005). Pluriliteracy in Diverse Contexts: Literacy Practices around Pluralistic Texts. In A. Pandian, M. K. Kabilan & S. Kaur (Eds.), *Teachers, Practices and Supportive Cultures* (pp. 226-236). Serdang: Penerbit Universiti Putra Malaysia.

Krishnamurthy, S. (2002, October). *The Multidimensionality of Blog Conversations: The Virtual Enactment of September 11*. Paper presented at the AOIR Internet Research 3.0: Net/Work/Theory, Maastricht, Netherlands.

Kuang, C. H. (2002). The Implications of lah, ah and hah as Used by Some Speakers in Malaysia. *Jurnal Bahasa Moden, 14*(Sept), 133-154.

Kvale, S. (1996). *Interviews: An Introduction to Qualitative Research Interviewing*. California: Sage Publications.

Kwan-Terry, A. (1978). The Meaning and Source of the 'la' and the 'what' Particles in Singapore English. *RELC Journal, 9*(2), 22-36.

Labov, W. (1972b). *Language in the Inner City*. Philadelphia: Pennsylvania University Press: Oxford: Blackwell.

Labov, W. (1972a). *Sociolinguistic Patterns*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Lasswell, H. D. (1948). *Power and Personality*. New York: WW Norton & Company.

Le Page, R. B. (1979). Review of Dell Hymes 'Foundations in Sociolinguistics' and Norbert Dittmar 'Sociolinguistics'. *Journal of Linguistics, 15*, 168-179.

Le Page, R. B., & Tabouret-Keller, A. (1985). *Acts of Identity: Creole-based Approaches to Language and Ethnicity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Lee, C. (2003). How Does Instant Messaging Affect Interaction Between the Genders? Stanford, CA: The Mercury Project for Instant Messaging Studies at Stanford University.

Lee, L. T. (2009). Why question English policy now? *The Star Online*. Retrieved 10 Mar 2009, from http://thestar.com.my/news/story.asp?file=/2009/3/10/nation/3440633&sec=nation

Lee, S. K. (2003). Multiple Identities in a Multicultural World: A Malaysian Perspective. *Journal of Language, Identity and Education, 2*(3), 137-158.

Leistyna, P., Woodrum, A., & Sherblom, S. A. (Eds.). (1996). *Breaking Free, the Transformative Power of Critical Pedagogy*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Publishing Group.

Lenhart, A., & Fox, S. (2006). Bloggers: A Portrait of the Internet's New Storytellers [Electronic Version]. Retrieved 6 June 2011, from http://www.pewinternet.org/~/media//Files/Reports/2006/PIP%20Bloggers%20Report%20July%2019%202006.pdf.pdf

Li, D. (1998). Incorporating L1 Pragmatic Norms and Cultural Values in L2: Developing English Language Curriculum for EIL in the Asia-Pacific Region. *Asian Englishes, 1*(1), 31-50.

Lifton, R. J. (1993). *The Protean Self*. New York: Basic Books.

Lim, L. (2007). Mergers and Acquisitions: On the Ages and Origins of Singapore English Particles. *World Englishes, 26*(4), 446-473.

Llamas, C., & Watt, D. (2010). *Language and Identities*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Lowenberg, P. H. (1986). Sociolinguistic Context and Second Language Acquisition: Acculturation and Creativity in Malaysian English. *World Englishes, 5*(1), 71-83.

Mack, N., Woodsong, C., MacQueen, K. M., Guest, G., & Namey, E. (2005). *Qualitative Research Methods: A Data Collector's Field Guide*. USA: Family Health International.

Mariati bt Mohd. Salleh, Rosiah bt Othman, & Norazmi b Omar. (2010). *Blogging versus Writing in Class: Investigating Learners' Feedback.* Paper presented at the 19th MELTA International Conference: Transformations in English Language Education, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

Marlow, C. (2004 May). *Audience, Structure and Authority in the Weblog Community*. Paper presented at the International Communication Association Conference, New Orleans, LA. Retrieved 6 Oct 2006, from http://www.researchmethods.org/ICA2004.pdf

Maryam. (2011, Jul 12). Why is Blogging Cool? *Heathfield's Year 6 Blog*, 2011, Nov 7, from http://y62011.heathfieldcps.net/2011/07/12/why-is-blogging-cool-by-maryam/

Matthews, G. (2000). *Global Culture/Individual Identity: Searching for a Home in the Cultural Supermarket*. London: Routledge.

May, S. (2001). *Language and Minority Rights*. London: Longman.

Mayring, P. (2000). Qualitative Content Analysis. *Forum: Qualitative Social Research [Sozialforschung], 1*(2), Art. 20.

Merriam, S. B., & Mazanah Muhamad. (2000). How Cultural Values Shapes Learning in Older Adulthood: The Case of Malaysia [Electronic Version]. *Adult Education Quarterly*, *51*, 45-63. Retrieved 2013, Aug 15, from http://aeq.sagepub.com/content/51/1/45.full.pdf+html

Meyer, B., Sit, R. A., Spaulding, V. A., Mead, S. E., & Walker, N. (1997). *Age Group Differences in World Wide Web Navigation*. Paper presented at the CHI 97 Electronic Publications: Late-Breaking/Short Talks. Retrieved 2008, May 29, from http://www.sigchi.org/chi97/proceedings/short-talk/bm.htm

Middleton, D., & Edwards, D. (1990). *Collective Remembering*. London: Sage Publications.

Miller, C. R., & Shepherd, D. (2004). Blogging as Social Action: A Genre Analysis of the Weblog [Electronic Version]. *Into the Blogosphere. Rhetoric, Community, and Culture of Weblogs*. Retrieved 13 Jun 2007, from http://blog.lib.umn.edu/blogosphere/blogging_as_social_action.html

Milroy, L. (1980). *Language and Social Networks*. Baltimore: University Park Press.

Milroy, L. (1987). *Observing & Analysing Natural Language: A Critical Account of Sociolinguistic Method*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers.

Mishler, E. G. (1986). *Research Interviewing: Context and Narrative*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Mishne, G., & Glance, N. (2006). *Leave a Reply: An Analysis of Weblog Comments*. Paper presented at the 3rd Annual Workshop on the Weblogging Ecosystem: Aggregation, Analysis and Dynamics. Retrieved 2012, Nov 14, from http://wwwconference.org/proceedings/www2006/www.blogpulse.com/www2006-workshop/papers/wwe2006-blogcomments.pdf.

Miura, A., & Yamashita, K. (2007). Psychological and Social Influences on Blog Writing: An Online Survey of Blog Authors in Japan. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication, 12*(4), 1452-1471.

Moore, J. (2012, Sept 19). What is Writer's Voice? Retrieved Jan 30, 2014, from http://killzoneauthors.blogspot.com/2012/09/what-is-writers-voice.html#.UunNz8tWHcs

Morais, E. (1994). *Malaysian Business Talk. A Study of the Patterns of Conflict and Non-conflict in Verbal Interactions.* Unpublished PhD dissertation, University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur.

Morais, E. (2000). Talking in English but Thinking like a Malaysian: Insights from a Car Assembly Plant. In H. M. Said & K. S. Ng (Eds.), *English is an Asian Language: the Malaysian Context* (pp. 90-106). Kuala Lumpur: Persatuan Bahasa Moden & The Macquarie Library Pty. Ltd.

Morais, E. (2001). Lectal varieties of Malysian English. In V. Ooi (Ed.), *Evolving identities: the English language in Singapore and Malaysia*. Singapore: Times Academic Press.

Mortensen, T., & Walker, J. (2002). Blogging Thoughts: Personal Publication as an Online Research Tool. In A. Morrison (Ed.), *Researching ICTs in Context* (pp. 249-279). Oslo: InterMedia, University of Oslo.

Multimedia Communications Malaysia Commission. (2015). Internet Users Survey 2014 [Electronic Version]. Retrieved 2016, Mar 6, from http://www.skmm.gov.my/skmmgovmy/media/General/pdf/Internet-Users-Survey-2014.pdf

Myers, G. (2010). *The Discourse of Blogs and Wikis*. London: Continuum International Publishing Group Ltd.

Nair-Venugopal, S. (2000a). English as Sociolect and Ethnolect in Malaysian Business Discourse. In H. M. Said & K. S. Ng (Eds.), *English is an Asian language: the Malaysian context* (pp. 78-89). Kuala Lumpur: Persatuan Bahasa Moden & The Macquarie Library Pty. Ltd.

Nair-Venugopal, S. (2000b). English, Identity, and the Malaysian Workplace. *World Englishes, 19*(2), 205-213.

Nair-Venugopal, S. (2000). *Language Choice and Communication in Malaysian Business*. Bangi: Penerbit Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia.

Nair-Venugopal, S. (2003). Malaysian English, Normativity and Workplace Interactions. *World Englishes, 22*(1), 15-29.

Nair-Venugopal, S. (1999). Talk-mediated Literacy: Negotiating Paths in Training. In A. Pandian (Ed.), *Global Literacy: Visions, Revisions and Vistas in Education* (pp. 125-130). Serdang: Universiti Putra Malaysia Press.

Nardi, B. A., Schiano, D. J., & Gumbrecht, M. (2004). Blogging as Social Activity, or, Would You Let 900 Million People Read Your Diary? *CSCW'04 Chicago, Illinois, USA., 6*(3), 222-231.

Nardi, B. A., Schiano, D. J., Gumbrecht, M., & Swartz, L. (2004). Why We Blog. *Communications of the ACM, 47*(12), 41-46.

Newman, D. M., & O'Brien, J. (2013). Building Reality: The Social Construction of Knowledge. In *Sociology (Reader)*. Thousand Oaks, California: SAGE Publications, Inc.

Nik Safiah Karim. (1973). Bahasa Slanga di Kalangan Mahasiswa Universiti Malaya: Satu Tinjauan Sosiolinguistik. *Jurnal Dewan Bahasa, 17*(12), 23-29.

Noels, K. A., Pelletier, L. G., Clement, R., & Vallerand, R. J. (2000). Why are You Learning a Second Language? Motivation Orientations and Self-determination Theory. *Language Learning, 50*, 57-85.

Noraini Ibrahim. (2008). Language(s) in the Judicial Process: Tempering Justice with 'mercy'. *The TESOL Law Journal, 2*, 26-44.

Norizah Hassan, & Azirah Hashim. (2009). Electronic English in Malaysia: Features and Language in Use. *English Today 100, 25*(4), 39-46.

Norrish, J. (1997). english or English? Attitudes, Local Varieties and English Language Teaching. *TESL-EJ, 3*(1), A-2.

Norton, B. (1997). Language, Identity, and the Ownership of English. *TESOL Quarterly, 31*(3), 409-429.

Nuffnang. (2009). Asia-Pacific Blog Awards. Retrieved 11 Mar 2011, from http://awards.nuffnang.com/index.php

Olcon, M. (2003). Blog jako dokument osobisty - specyfika dziennika prowadzonego w Internecie [Blog as a Personal Document. Specificity of a Journal Written on the Internet]. *Kultura i Spo┐eczefstwol, 47*(2), 123-145.

Ong, L. T., & Pemberton, R. (2009). Enhancing Classroom Learning through Computer-Mediated Reflective Writing and Peer Feedback. *Journal of Modern Languages, 19*, 99-120.

Ooi, V. B. Y. (Ed.). (2001). *Evolving Identities: The English Language in Singapore and Malaysia*. Singapore: Times Academic Press.

Ornstein, R. (2008). The Sociology of Young Adulthood: An Introductory Study of the Unknown [Electronic Version]. Retrieved 30 May 2008, from http://www.uic.edu/depts/comm/lifehist/LHMPUnderSociology.html

Overgaard, S., & Zahavi, D. (2009). Phenomenological Sociology: The Subjectivity of Everyday Life. In M. H. Jacobsen (Ed.), *Encountering the Everyday: An Introduction to the Sociologies of the Unnoticed* (pp. 93-115). Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Pakir, A. (1992). Dictionary Entries for Discourse Particles. In A. Pakir (Ed.), *Words in a Cultural Context* (pp. 143-152). Singapore: Unipress.

Papacharissi, Z. (2002). The Self Online: The Utility of Personal Home Pages. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media, 46*(3), 346-368.

Papacharissi, Z. (2004, May). *The Blogger Revolution? Audiences as Media Producers.* Paper presented at the Communication and Technology Division, International Communication Association, New Orleans, L.A.

Papastergiadis, N. (2000). *The Turbulence of Migration*. Cambridge: Polity.

Partridge, E. (1933). *Slang Today and Yesterday*. London: Routledge.

Pattison, D. (2007, Apr 27). The Writer's Voice: What is Voice? Retrieved 30 Jan, 2014, from http://www.darcypattison.com/voice/the-writers-voice-what-is-voice

Pedersen, S., & Macafee, C. (2007). Gender Differences in British Blogging. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication, 12*(4), 1472-1492.

Pennycook, A. (2001). *World Englishes, World Anguishes and Globalisation*. Paper presented at the Malaysian International Conference on Language, Linguistics, and Culture (MICOLLAC).

Penrod, D. (2007). *Using Blogs to Enhance Literacy: the Next Powerful Step in 21st-Century Learning*. Plymouth: Rowman & Littlefield Education.

Pfohl, S. (2008). The Reality of Social Constructions [Electronic Version]. Retrieved 2015, Aug 19, from http://www.trabal.org/gtheory/wp-content/uploads/2008/01/pfohl2008.pdf

Philipsen, G. (1987). The Prospect for Cultural Communication. In L. Kincaid (Ed.), *Communication Theory: Eastern and Western Perspectives* (pp. 245-254). New York: Academic Press.

Pierce, T. (2004, Jun 16). How to Blog. *Busblog: Nothing in Here is True*, 31 Jan 2012, from http://www.tonypierce.com/blog/2004/06/how-to-blog-by-tony-pierce-110-1.htm

Pillai, S. (2006). Malaysian English as a First Language. In M. K. David (Ed.), *Language Choices and Discourse of Malaysian Families: Case Studies of Families in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia* (pp. 61-75). Petaling Jaya: Strategic Information and Research Development Centre (SIRD).

Pillai, S. (2008). Politeness and Power in Family Discourse. In M. K. David & Y. C. Kow (Eds.), *Politeness in Malaysian Family Talk* (pp. 1-18). Serdang: Penerbit Universiti Putra Malaysia.

Pillai, S. (2012). Colloquial Malaysian English. In B. Kortmann & K. Lunkenheimer (Eds.), *The Mouton World Atlas of Variation in English* (pp. 573-584). Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.

Pillai, S., & Fauziah Kamaruddin. (2006). The Variety of Malaysian English Used in Radio Advertisements. In Azirah Hashim & Norizah Hassan (Eds.), *Varieties of English in South East Asia and Beyond* (pp. 39-54). Kuala Lumpur: University of Malaya Press.

Pitkow, J., & Kehoe, C. (1997). GVU's 7th WWW User Survey [Electronic Version], from http://www-static.cc.gatech.edu/gvu/user_surveys/survey-1997-04/

Platt, J. T., & Weber, H. (1980). *English in Singapore and Malaysia: Status, Features, and Functions*. Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press.

Platt, J. T., Weber, H., & Ho, M. L. (1984). *The New Englishes*. London, Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Polinsky, M., & Kagan, O. (2007). Heritage Languages: In the 'Wild' and in the Classroom. *Language and Linguistics Compass, 1*(5), 368-395.

Preisler, B. (1999). Functions and Forms of English in a European EFL Country. In T. Bex & R. Watts (Eds.), *Standard English: the Widening Debate*. London: Routledge.

Preshous, A. (2001). Where are you going ah? An Account of the Origin and Development of Malaysian English. *English Today 65, 17*(1), 46-53.

Qian, H., & Scott, C. R. (2007). Anonymity and Self-Disclosure on Weblogs. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication, 12*, 1428-1451.

Rajadurai, J. (2004). The Faces and Facets of English in Malaysia. *English Today 80, 20*(4), 54-58.

Rami A. Al-Sa'di, & Jihad M. Hamdan. (2005). "Synchronous Online Chat" English: Computer-mediated Communication. *World Englishes, 24*(4), 409-424.

Ramlee Mustapha, & Wong, L. S. M. (2009, Jun 12). The Dynamics of English Language Use Among Malaysian Bloggers: Perception of TESL Students at Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia. *Jurnal Personalia Pelajar*(12), 39-66.

Rand, A. (1962). Introducing Objectivism. *Ayn Rand Institute*, 2013, Jul 08, from http://www.aynrand.org/site/PageServer?pagename=objectivism_intro

Ratliff, C. (2006). WATW by the Numbers. *CultureCat: Rhetoric and Feminism*, 2007, Nov 29, from http://culturecat.net/node/1030

Ratner, C. (2008). Subjectivism [Electronic Version]. *The Sage Encyclopedia of Qualitative Research Methods*. Retrieved 2013, Jul 10, from http://www.sonic.net/~cr2/subjectivism.htm

Reigel, D. (2005). *Positive Feedback Loops in Second Language Learning.* Unpublished Thesis. Master of Arts in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages, Portland State University.

Rettberg, J. W. (2008). *Blogging*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Richards, J. C., & Tay, M. W. J. (1977). The la Particle in Singapore English. In W. Crewe (Ed.), *The English Language in Singapore* (pp. 141-156). Singapore: Eastern University Press.

Rodino, M. (1997). Breaking out of Binaries: Reconceptualizing Gender and its Relationship to Language in Computer-mediated Communication. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication, 3*(3).

Rosenberg, S. (2006, August 9). Size of the blogosphere: 50 million or bust. *The Wordyard Project*, from http://www.wordyard.com/2006/08/09/blogosphere-size/

Roxas-Tope, L. R. (1998). *(Un)framing Southeast Asia: Nationalism and the Postcolonial Text in English in Singapore, Malaysia and the Philippines*. Manila: University of the Philippines.

Ruble, D., & Martin, C. (1998). Gender Development. In W. Damon & N. Eisenberg (Eds.), *Handbook of Child Psychology: Social, Emotional, and Personality Development* (5th ed., Vol. 3, pp. 993-1016). New York: Wiley.

Samuel, M. (2000). English is an Asian Language: Implications for Pedagogy. In H. M. Said & K. S. Ng (Eds.), *English is an Asian Language: The Malaysian Context* (pp. 26-34). Kuala Lumpur: Persatuan Bahasa Moden & The Macquarie Library Pty. Ltd.

Sanderson, T. (2008). *Corpus, Culture, Discourse* (Vol. 39). Denmark: BoD - Books on Demand: Gunter Narr Verlag Tübingen.

Schindler, N. (1997). Guardians of Disorder: Rituals of Youthful Culture at the Dawn of the Modern Age. In *A History of Young People in the West: Volume One: Ancient and Medieval Rites of Passage* (pp. 240-282). Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Schmidt, J. (2007). Blogging Practices in the German-speaking Blogosphere. Findings from the "Wie ich blogge?!"-Survey [Electronic Version]. *Research Centre "New Communication Media" working paper 07-02*. Retrieved 13 Jun 2007, from http://www.fonk-bamberg.de/pdf/fonkpaper0702.pdf

Schmidt, U. (2008). *Language Loss and Ethnic Identity of Minorities*. Denmark: European Centre for Minority Issues (ECMI).

Schneider, E. W. (2007). *Postcolonial English: Varieties Around the World*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Schutz, A. (1964). *Studies in Social Theory: Collected Papers II*. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff.

Searls, D., & Sifry, D. (2003, March 01). Building with Blogs [Electronic Version]. *Linux Journal: Blogs and Lists*. Retrieved 22 Jul 2011, from http://www.linuxjournal.com/article/6497?page=0,0

Selinker, L. (1972). Interlanguage. *International Review of Applied Linguistics, 10*(3), 209-231.

Shepard, C. A., Giles, H., & LePoire, B. A. (2001). Communication Accommodation Theory In W. P. Robinson & H. Giles (Eds.), *The New Handbook of Language and Social Psychology*: John Wiley & Sons Ltd.

Shirky, C. (2003). Power Laws, Weblogs, and Inequality. *Clay Shirky's Writings about the Internet: Economics and Culture, Media and Community, Open Source.* Retrieved 5 Sept, 2011, from http://www.shirky.com/writings/powerlaw_weblog.html

Sifry, D. (2006, August 6). State of the Blogosphere 2006. *State of the Blogosphere* Retrieved 7 Mar 2011, from http://www.sifry.com/alerts/archives/000443.html

Simmel, G. (1950). The Stranger. In K. Wolff (Ed.), *The Sociology of Georg Simmel* (pp. 401-408). Glencoe, Illinois: Free Press.

Skiba, R. (1997). Code Switching as a Countenance of Language Interference. *The Internet TESL Journal, 3*(10).

Smedley, F. (2006). Code-switching and Identity on the Blogs: an Analysis of Tagllish in Computer Mediated Communication. Unpublished Master Thesis. Auckland University of Technology.

Smith, M. J. (1998). E-merging Strategies of Identity: The Rhetorical Construction of Self in Personal Web Sites (doctoral dissertation, Ohio University, 1998). *Dissertation Abstracts International, 59*, 4315.

Smuts, G., the Right Hon. J.C.,. (1927). *Holism and Evolution* (2nd ed.). London: Macmillan.

Soo, K. S. (1990). Malaysian English at the crossroads: some sign-posts. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development, 11*(3), 199-214.

Stewart, W. (1965). Urban Negro Speech: Sociolinguistic Factors Affecting English Teaching. *Social Dialects and Language Learning, 7*, 10-18.

Stiler, G. M., & Philleo, T. (2003). Blogging and Blogspots: An Alternative Format for Encouraging Reflective Practice among Preservice Teachers. *Education, 123*(4), 789-797.

Strauss, L. (2009, June 30). Online Culture: Is Your Definition of Real Life Out of Date? *Successful Blog*, 2011, Jul 27, from http://www.successful-blog.com/

Stroud, C., & Wee, L. (2005). Style, Identity and English Language Literacy. *Linguistics and Education 16*, 319-337.

Syed Hussein Alattas. (1997). *The Five Hundred Million Dollarman*. Kuala Lumpur: Jaharah Enterprise.

Tai, E. (2011, Nov 21). Befrienders Taps Internet to Help the Suicide-Prone. *The Star Online*. Retrieved 2011-11-21, from http://thestar.com.my/lifestyle/story.asp?file=/2011/11/21/lifefocus/9910656&sec=lifefocus

Tajfel, H. (1978). Social Categorization, Social Identity and Social Comparison. In H. Tajfel (Ed.), *Differentiation between Social Groups: Studies in the Social Psychology of Intergroup Relations* (pp. 61-76). London: Academic Press.

Talbot, D. C. (1989). A Comparison of the Status and Functions of English in Hong Kong, Malaysia and Singapore. *Perspectives (Hong Kong Journals Online). City University of Hong Kong, 1*, 30-43.

Tan, S. K., & Low, E. L. (2010). How Different are the Monophthongs of Malay Speakers of Malaysian and Singapore English? *English World-Wide, 31*(2), 162-189.

Tannen, D. (1995). *Gender and Discourse* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Tay, M. W. J. (1989). Code Switching and Code Mixing as a Communicative Strategy in Multilingual Discourse. *World Englishes, 8*(3), 407-417.

Tay, M. W. J. (1993). *The English Language in Singapore: Issues and Development*. Singapore: UniPress.

The Commissioner of Law Revision. (2009). *Federal Constitution of Malaysia: Incorporating All Amendments up to P.U.(A) 164/2009*. Retrieved 28 Nov 2010. from http://www.agc.gov.my/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=1406&Itemid=259&lang=en.

The Commissioner of Law Revision. (2012). *Laws of Malaysia: Evidence Act 1950*. Retrieved 2014, Jul 21. from http://www.agc.gov.my/Akta/Vol.%202/Act%2056%20-%20Evidence%20Act%201950.pdf.

The Guardian. (2013, Aug 06). 'Teenager Hannah Smith killed herself because of online bullying, says father'. *The Guardian Online*. Retrieved 2013, Aug 06, from http://www.theguardian.com/society/2013/aug/06/hannah-smith-online-bullying

The Nation. (2014). Chinese Paper Calls US Envoy White-hearted Banana Man. *The Nation*. Retrieved 2014, Mar 30, from http://www.nation.com.pk/international/02-Mar-2014/chinese-paper-calls-us-envoy-white-hearted-banana-man

The Star Online. (2012, Nov 13). NUS Terminates Sex Blogger's Scholarship [Electronic Version]. Retrieved 2012, Nov 13, from http://thestar.com.my/news/story.asp?file=/2012/11/13/nation/20121113114717&sec=nation

The Star Online. (2012, Oct 17). 'Porn Blog' Couple Causes Furore [Electronic Version]. Retrieved 2012, Oct 17, from http://thestar.com.my/news/story.asp?file=/2012/10/17/nation/12182362&sec=nation

The Star Online. (2009, 23 June). Yesteryear's switch to BM put paid to good English today. *The Star Online*. Retrieved 2009, Jun 23, from http://thestar.com.my/news/story.asp?file=/2009/6/23/nation/4176020&sec=

Thiong'o, N. w. (1987). *Decolonising The Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature*. Zimbabwe Zimbabwe Publishing House.

Thong, S. (2007, Feb 13). You Know You're a Banana When... 2014, Mar 30, from https://scottthong.wordpress.com/2007/02/13/you-know-youre-a-banana-when/

Thurlow, C., Lengel, L., & Tomic, A. (2004). *Computer Mediated Communication: Social Interaction and the Internet*. London: Sage Publications.

Tongue, R. K. (1974). *The English of Singapore and Malaysia*. Singapore: Eastern Universities Press.

Trammell, K. D. (2004). Celebrity Weblogs: Investigation in the Persuasive Nature of Two-Way Communication. Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation. University of Florida, Gainesville, FL.

Trammell, K. D., Tarkowski, A., Hofmokl, J., & Sapp, A. M. (2006). Rzeczpospolita Blogo´w [Republic of Blog]: Examining Polish Bloggers Through Content Analysis. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication, 11*, 702-722.

Trammell, K. D., Williams, A. P., Postelnicu, M., & Landreville, K. D. (2006). Evolution of Online Campaigning: Increasing Interactivity in Candidate Web Sites and Blogs Through Text and Technical Features. *Mass Communication and Society, 9*(1), 21-44.

Turner, J. C. (1991). *Social Influence*. Buckingham, England: Open University Press; Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/ Cole.

Ulicny, B. (2008, Apr). *Modeling Malaysian Public Opinion by Mining the Malaysian Blogosphere.* Paper presented at the 1st Int'l Workshop on Social Computing, Behavioral Modeling and Prediction, Phoenix, AZ.

Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations. (2014). Young Adults (Ages 18-35). Retrieved April 26, 2016, from http://www.uua.org/re/youngadults

Valdes, G. (2000). The Teaching of Heritage Languages: An Introduction for Slavic-teaching Professionals. In O. Kagan & B. Rifkin (Eds.), *The Learning and Teaching of Slavic Languages and Cultures*. Bloomington, IN: Slavica.

Vethamani, M. E. (2006). Blogging and Trainee Teachers' Professional Development. In Muhammad Kamarul Kabilan, Norizan Abdul Razak & Mohamed Amin Embi (Eds.), *Online Teaching and Learning in ELT* (pp. 309-335). Malaysia: Penerbit Universiti Sains Malaysia.

Vygotsky, L. S. (1934). *Thought and Language*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). Mind in Society: The Development of Higher Psychological Processes (A. R. Luria, M. Lopez-Morillas, M. Cole & J. V. Wertsch, Trans.). In M. Cole, V. John-Steiner, S. Scribner & E. Souberman (Eds.). Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Walker, K. (2000). "It's difficult to hide it": The Presentation of Self on Internet Home Pages. *Qualitative Sociology, 23*(1), 99-120.

Wallace, J. L. (2013, Mar 7). The Writer's Voice: An Unconventional Definition. *Live to Write, Write to Live* Retrieved 30 Jan, 2014, from http://nhwn.wordpress.com/2013/03/07/the-writers-voice-an-unconventional-definition/

Ward, J. M. (2004). Blog Assisted Language Learning (BALL): Push Button Publishing for the Pupils [Electronic Version]. *TEFL Web Journal*, *3*, 1-16. Retrieved 25 Jul 2006, from http://www.teflweb-j.org/v3n1/blog_ward.pdf

Wee, L. (2004). Reduplication and Discourse Particles. In L. Lim (Ed.), *Singapore English: A Grammatical Description* (pp. 105-126). Amsterdam: Benjamins.

Wee, L. (2010). The Particle ya in Colloquial Singapore English. *World Englishes, 29*(1), 45-58.

Wenger. (2009). A Social Theory of Learning. In K. Illeris (Ed.), *Contemporary Theories of Learning* (pp. 209-218). Abingdon, Oxfordshire: Routledge.

Wenger, E. (1998). *Communities of Practice: Learning, Meaning, and Identity*. New York: Cambridge Press.

Wiehardt, G. (undated). Voice. *About.com* Retrieved 30 Jan, 2014, from http:fictionwriting.about.com/od/glossary/g/voice.htm

Windows Live Spaces. (2006). Blogging Asia: A Windows Live Report: Microsoft Corp.

Witmer, D. F., & Katzman, S. L. (1997). On-line Smiles: Does Gender Make a Difference in the Use of Graphic Accents? *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication, 2*(4).

Wodak, R., de Cillia, R., Reisigl, M., & Liebhart, K. (1999). *The Discursive Construction of National Identity*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Wong, I. (1982). Native-speaker English for the Third World today. In J. Pride (Ed.), *New Englishes*. Rowley, Mass: Newbury House.

Wong, K. F., & Xiao, Y. (2010). Diversity and Difference: Identity Issues of Chinese Heritage Language Learners from Dialect Backgrounds. *Heritage Language Journal, 7*(2), 153-187.

Wooi, K. (2009). Banana People. 2014, Mar 30, from http://www.kenwooi.com/2009/12/banana-people.html

Wroe, N. (2012, Aug 9). Chinua Achebe: A Life in Writing. *Nigeria Intel*, 2012, Dec 10, from http://www.nigeriaintel.com/2012/08/09/chinua-achebe-a-life-in-writing/

Yeow, B. K. (2009, Jul 21). What's There to Boast When We're Speaking Manglish? *The Star Online*. Retrieved 21 Jul 2009, from http://thestar.com.my/news/story.asp?file=/2009/7/21/focus/4355461&sec=focus

Zhou, Y., & Davis, J. (2007). Analysis of Weblog Link Structure - A Community Perspective. In J. Filipe, J. Cordeiro & V. Pedrosa (Eds.), *Web Information Systems and Technologies: International Conferences WEBIST 2005 and WEBIST 2006 Revised Selected Papers* (Vol. 1, pp. 307-320). Berlin Heidelberg: Springer-Verlag.

Zuraidah Mohd Don. (2000). Malay+English = A Malay Variety of English Vowels and Accent. In Halimah Mohd Said & K. S. Ng (Eds.), *English is an Asian Language: the Malaysian Context* (pp. 35-46). Kuala Lumpur: Persatuan Bahasa Moden & The Macquarie Library Pty. Ltd.