A STUDY OF DIGLOSSIA: A SURVEY OF DIFFERENT ENGLISH VARIETIES

USED BY UTAR ENGLISH LANGUAGE COURSE STUDNETS.

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APPROVAL FORM

This research paper attached hereto, entitled "A Study of Diglossia: A Survey of Different English Varieties Used by UTAR English Language Course Students" prepared and submitted by Joey Low Xiao Xuan in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Bachelor of Arts and Social Science is hereby accepted.

_____   Date:_____

Supervisor

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ABSTRACT

This research project reports a study of diglossia by conducting a survey of English varieties used by the university students in Malaysia. In particular, the study seeks to examine the university students' language choice and reasons, as well as their language attitudes. Questionnaire technique was used to elicit data from university students in Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman who are pursuing their degree course in English Language. It follows from the findings on language choice that the relationship between Standard English and Malaysian English is diglossic. As for the language attitudes, perhaps due to the course major, most respondents have a positive attitude towards Standard English rather than towards Malaysian English in all aspects. However, most respondents think that the Malaysian English is replacing Standard English to become the more widely spoken variety among Malaysians. Thus, the diglossic relationship between Standard English and Malaysian English is likely to continue in Malaysia. Findings of the study shed light on the diglossic situation of English language in a multilingual country as well as reflect the opinions of the youth in Malaysia on the two distinct English varieties that have existed in their community.

DECLARATION

I declare that the material contained in this paper is the end result of my own work and
that due acknowledgement has been given in the bibliography and references to ALL
sources be they printed, electronic or personal.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Diglossia was first introduced by Ferguson (as cited in Holmes, 2007) as a stable language situation where two or more varieties of the same language have different roles to play in society, with one regarded as a high (or H) variety and the other as a low (or L) variety. Each variety is used for different functions but the H and L varieties complement each other. The H form is used for education, religion, and formal communication while the L form is used for informal contacts and local usage (Ferguson, 1959).

English is the most important foreign language in Malaysia. It is widely used in practically all aspects of daily life, various professions and is an important requirement in Malaysia academic settings (Muniandy, 2010). The focus of this study is to describe and explain the diglossic situation of the English Language used among Malaysians, particularly university students.

Basically the varieties of English used in Malaysia can be classified into two. The H variety of English used in our country is the Standard British English which is taught formally in schools and is regarded as the linguistic model in the education system of Malaysia (Muniandy, 2010). On the other hand, the L variety refers to Malaysia Colloquial English which is widely used in informal situations and acquired informally. In other words, the relationship between Standard British English (or Standard English) and Malaysia Colloquial English (or Malaysian English) is diglossic.

Focusing on students majoring in the Bachelor of Arts (Hons) English Language in the Faculty of Arts and Social Science (FAS) in Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman (UTAR), this research studies the phenomenon of diglossia on English Language used by the Malaysian university students in different communicative settings.

1.2 Statement of Problem

Diglossic situations can be found in communities and countries all over the world. Although many researches were conducted based on the studies of diglossia, the studies on diglossia of English Language in Malaysia context were considered inadequate. Moreover this research intends to use university students instead of the whole society as the research targets.

It was a fact that the phenomenon of diglossia had been observed and reported extensively before in the speech of people in different communities but almost none in the speech of Malaysian university students, particularly those who are English Language majors. However, this phenomenon appears to be widespread among youths in Malaysia.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this research is to survey a significant sample of undergraduates in UTAR, with the aim of obtaining information regarding the diglossic situation of English Language used in Malaysia, especially among the well-educated university students who are pursuing the English Language degree course. Besides that,

this study also seeks explanation as to why a variety is chosen to be used instead of the other in certain circumstances.

A related purpose is to provide a perspective on the issue of diglossia from the point of view of the students who are majoring in the English Language degree course. The aim is, on the basis of this attempt, to describe and show current attitudes of youngsters in Malaysia towards the English varieties that have existed in their community.

1.4 Significance of the Study

This study is important as it will provide insights into the diglossic situation of English used by the Malaysian university students. Besides, the factors that influence the students' choices of using a certain variety in certain communicative settings will be stated as well. In addition, the language attitudes of the respondents regarding different English varieties will be taken into account.

This study will stress the importance as well as suggest the right variety to be used in the appropriate context, in order that students could modify their languages used for distinct functions. Moreover, this study is significant because the students will understand lacking knowledge and misusage of an important language may cause misunderstandings or affect their daily communicative encounters and both their academic results and careers in future.

1.5 Scope of the Study

This study focuses on investigating the two distinct English varieties used by UTAR English Language course students. Basically, the whole project is aimed to answer the below three research questions in order to describe and explain the diglossic situation of English Language used among university students in Malaysia.

Although some researches may link diglossic situation to bilingualism, the relationship between diglossia and bilingual or multilingual context in Malaysia is not the focus of the study.

1.6 Research Questions

This research focuses on the diglossic situation of the English Language used among Malaysian university students. The research questions are as follows:

1. What is the university students' language choice between the H and L varieties in different communicative settings?

2. What are the factors that have contributed to the different English varieties used by the students?

3. What are the students' language attitudes towards different English varieties?

1.7 Conclusion

The increasing status of English as an international language is not because of the growth in the number of native speakers, but more due to a dramatic increase in the number of individuals around the world who are acquiring English as a second language

(McKay & Bokhorst-Heng, 2008). English is the most widely spoken second language in many countries around the world, including Malaysia.

In the past few decades, there has been considerable public concern about the role of English Language in Malaysia. One of the related issues is the language choice and language attitudes towards English varieties in the country. This study is therefore believed to provide a clearer picture of the diglossic situation of the English Language used among Malaysian university students.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

As discussed in chapter one, this study is focused on diglossia of English Language used among Malaysian university students. This chapter consists of the definition of key word, the review of literature on English varieties used in Malaysia, language choice and factors, and the language attitudes. The previous related studies are covered and discussed in this chapter.

2.2 Definition of Key Word - Diglossia

Diglossia refers to the widespread existence of sharply divergent formal and informal varieties of a language within a society each used in different social contexts or for performing different functions (dictionary.com, 2011).

The term diglossia was first introduced into English from French by Ferguson (1959). He used the term diglossia to refer to "one particular kind of standardization where two varieties of a language exist side by side throughout the community, with each having a definite role to play". Charles Ferguson (1959) further explained that, diglossia is "a relatively stable language situation in which, in addition to the primary dialect of the language (which may include a standard or regional standards), there is a very divergent, highly codified (often grammatically more complex) superposed variety, the vehicle of a large and respected body of written literature, either of an earlier period or in another speech community, which is learned largely by formal education and is used for most

written and formal spoken purposes but it is not used by any section of the community for ordinary conversation". The superposed variety is termed by Ferguson (1959) as the high (H) variety and the regional dialect as the low (L) variety.

The use of the term diglossia was expanded by Fishman (1967) as he hypothesized that diglossia could occur in any situation where two language varieties, even unrelated ones, are used in functionally distinct ways.

The notion that diglossia could also be used to characterize other multilingual situations where the H and L varieties were not genetically related, such as Sanskrit as H variety and Kannada as L variety in India (Azim, 2007). Since then, the researches on diglossia had focused to a greater extent, though not entirely, on characterizing various kinds of extended diglossia.

However this study follows the original definition of Ferguson, where diglossia is defined as the distinction between the two forms of a language used in different situational settings for different social purposes.

2.3 Review of Literature

2.3.1 Diglossia

Among the recent studies on diglossia, a large number of researches were carried out in country outside Malaysia. One of the most noteworthy attempts at describing diglossia was done by Jeremy Palmer (2007) on Arabic diglossia, focusing on proving

teaching only the standard variety is a disservice to students. His study contributed positively to the topic and showed the importance of the non-standard variety which was often neglected.

Diglossia was often linked together with bilingualism and it was clearly shown in Louis-Jacques Dorais's (1989) study on the topic of bilingualism and diglossia in the Canadian Eastern Arctic. Suzanne Romaine (2000), a professor of English Language at the University of Oxford, discussed diglossia in a general aspect in her latest published sociolinguistics textbook. David Christopher (1989) provided a clearer picture of a diglossic speech community as he made a comparison between diglossic and non-diglossic societies in his study.

The past researches which were more related to this study were focused on diglossia of Singapore English. Bao Zhi Ming (2006) and Hong Hua Qing (2006) in a research on diglossia and register variation in Singapore English addressed two related issues; the first being the extent to which the Singapore English diglossia is supported by corpus data and the second, the extent to which diglossia is reducible to register variation. Jakob Leimgruber (2007) conducted a study on English in Singapore as well but he focused on investigating the speech community's use of Singapore English's inherent variation – that is, to define Singapore English is more on a continuum as suggested by Platt (1975) or diglossia as suggested by (Gupta, 1994; 2001). Ultimately the distribution of percentage rates according to situation settings seems to favour the diglossic view proposed by Gupta. Another most recent study on Singapore English was done by Harada

(2009) to examine the roles of Singapore Standard English (SSE) and Singlish and show the diglossic relationship between SSE and Singlish.

Although Singapore English and Malaysian English are more or less similar, they are different from each other at least on two-non-linguistic criteria according to Baskaran (2005). The first is the recognition of a separate variety is long overdue and the second is the language policies in both the nations have been different for the past few decades and which will then have varied implications on the role and long term effects of English on the local populace of each nation (Baskaran, 2005).

2.3.2 English Language used in Malaysia

According to Muniandy (2010), Malaysia is a multi-racial society which is strongly bonded by its system of monarchy where Malays form the largest portion of its demography and Bahasa Melayu (Malay) as its national language. Though Malay is still the most commonly used lingua franca among Malaysians, English is gaining more importance and relevance in the country. As the primary foreign language in Malaysia, most people use either English or a uniquely Malaysian colloquial form of it called Malaysian English, to hold daily conversations, give directions or make any ordinary remarks (Murugesan, 2003).

Malaysian English (ME) is one of the new varieties of English, which displays different pronunciation, vocabulary, grammatical and pragmatic features. According to

Solomon (2003), Malaysian English refers to the result of expressing in English one's thoughts in another language especially Malay or Chinese. It is heavily accented with words and sentence structures borrowed from the vernacular. Often, it is a direct or literal translation from these languages (Solomon, 2003).

As mentioned by Muniandy (2010), there has been a strong decline in the levels of English proficiency in the country mainly because Malaysians have come to realize that it is no longer necessary nor desirable to aim at an English native speaker's speech to achieve their communicative function. This is evident in Malaysians' everyday speech, which are often marred by grammatical and phonological errors or at time too loaded with "suffixes" (e.g. lah, loh, meh etc.) and loan words from other languages (Muniandy, 2010).

Baskaran (2005) claimed that Malaysian English is the English that has developed through the centuries in a multilingual tapestry that is Malaysia and was brought into the country by the English but has filtered through to the heterogeneous local populace. The basic features of grammar, pronunciation and vocabulary are not totally different from the original British English but each of those linguistic levels has had influences from the local languages as well as modifications that have now been fossilized deep enough to be recognizably Malaysian (Baskaran, 2005).

There have been a considerable number of attempts at describing Malaysian English. In most cases, however, Malaysian English was subsumed under Singapore English.

Among the recent attempts at describing Malaysian English or Singapore English, a large number of them actually come from non-Malaysian sources such as Knowles (2002), Leimgruber (2007), Harada (2009) whilst Platt (1983) has a more detailed description of its variety.

As for the studies done by Malaysians or Singaporean linguists, Loga Mahesan Baskaran (2005) seemed to be the most thorough where the structural elements of variation were concerned. Vincent Ooi's attempt (2000) at describing English Language in Singapore and Malaysia was considered as the representative as a detailed linguistic study. The research of Tengku Mahadi (2005), Ambigapathy Pandian (2005), and Sarjit Kaur (2005) was somewhat cursory and lack linguistic detail, although for a general impression to investigate the role of English Language in Malaysia context these are sufficient. David M. K. (2007) conducted an exploratory study of the language of Malaysian youth and provided a truly representative picture of the use of slang by Malaysian youth, especially for whom English has become a first language.

Other attempts that could be considered related are those of Stephanie Pillai's (2006) and Fauziah Kamaruddin's (2006) on the variety of Malaysian English used in radio advertisements, Faisal Hanapiah's (2002) on English Language and the language of

development from a Malaysian perspective, Dr. Hannah Pillay's (2004) on the issue of

models of English for Malaysian schools, and the latest by Mohan K. Muniandy (2010)

on the sociolinguistic competence and Malaysian student's English language proficiency.

Most of these were thorough in their approach to the topic, but none of them regarded the

different English varieties in Malaysia as a diglossic situation in entirety. They were,

however, attempts at describing the development of the English language in the

Malaysian context.

2.3.3 Language Choice and Factors

Standard British English requires the use of proper grammar and syntax with

appropriate vocabulary. It is important for students to learn to handle formal language in

schools because if one only learns to speak at the colloquial level, one can never rise up

to the occasion to speak formal English when the need arises (Muniandy, 2010).

Besides, the functions of English in the employment and education domain are

both obvious and prevalent in Malaysian scene. According to Hanapiah (2002), people

with paper qualifications (academics), computer skills or technical skills and good

proficiency in English can expect to get employment easier and faster than those who are

merely having qualifications. The development of English in Malaysian education

domain is vital. From the past two decades until now, the government has shown greater

and more commitment in creating awareness to the people about the importance of

mastering good English with respect to education from primary to tertiary level

(Hanapiah, 2002).

According to Muniandy (2010), though the use of Standard English is very much desired, one must not dismiss the significance of other varieties of the language, particularly Malaysian English. He claimed that students must be made to realize the importance of Standard English in academic and formal settings; but at the same time be conscious of the communicative functions of Malaysian English. It is an undeniable fact that the non-standard variety has an important social function of fostering ties too.

According to Baskaran (2005), the student population being a major area of the use of Malaysian English, so it is inevitable that certain standard English lexemes would have been localized for informal use especially among students in school (secondary), at colleges (tertiary) and universities.

There are a number of factors which can affect the language choice. According to Bloomer(2005), one way of classifying factors which can cause language variation is to divide them into two broad groupings: the first comprises characteristics of the language users themselves (user factors); the second is made up of features of the situation in which language is used and what it is being used for (situational factors).

The user factors focus on the characteristics of the individuals involved – they include aspects such as the users' age, gender, profession, class, level of education, nation, region of origin ethnicity, religion, disability, personality (Bloomer, 2005). These things matter for all the individuals involved but not only for the speaker or writer.

The situational factors relate to the situation that the language is used in and what it is used for (Bloomer, 2005). Irrespective of who is using it, language is likely to be used differently when we are in different location or using different medium of communication. It is also likely to cause language variation depending on the topic and the purpose of communication.

All these factors show that how languages are used is intimately dependent on a variety of social contacts and as such, they could reasonably be investigated. Therefore, when focusing on language choice, the factors that have contributed to the language choice should be given attention as well.

2.3.4 Language Attitudes

Although sociolinguists as well as applied linguists abroad have done a great deal of research in the area of language attitude, not much have been done in Malaysia on this particular topic. There are many definitions for attitude. For the purpose of this paper, the simplest explanation for this concept was used, that is, the way an individual feels and thinks about something or someone.

According to Omar (1992), attitude may be said to be generated by the following factors: cultural beliefs, socio-political background, and teaching/learning milieu. All these factors may generate positive as well as negative attitudes depending on the situation and the time when their roles are played. In this study, language attitudes refer to how the respondents regard the H and L varieties of English Language.

One of the most important studies which have been done on language attitudes lately was The Language Attitude Survey of Jamaica conducted by the Jamaican Language Unit (2005) to assess the views of Jamaicans towards Patwa (Jamaican Creole) as a language. The sample consisted of 1,000 Jamaicans, stratified along the variables of region, area, age and gender. The survey showed clearly how Jamaicans regarded Patwa as compared to English Language. Several significant views were revealed in the findings. For instance, most Jamaicans felt that an English speaker was more intelligent and educated. Additionally, less than 10% of the sample thought that a Patwa speaker would have more money than and English speaker (The Jamaican Language Unit, 2005).

For the language attitude surveys done in Malaysia, most of the studies conducted were based on the attitudes in learning English Language instead of attitudes towards different English varieties. The study done by Omar (1992) on attitudes in the learning of English among Malaysian students is notable. His study consisted of two parts, where the first part was a general discussion on language attitudes and the research works on this phenomenon, as well as the theories that may have a bearing on various interpretations of the relationship between language, thought and culture. The second part discussed the findings of a survey by questionnaire on the language attitudes of undergraduates at the University of Malaya.

Language attitude is not the main focus but definitely one of the highlights of this study because it is expected to show whether or not the two distinct varieties of the English Language can co-exist in Malaysia community continually.

2.4 Conclusion

Generally speaking, in consideration of the fact that most of the past researches reported insufficient length and depth into the diglossic situation of the English Language used in Malaysia, this study aims to investigate Malaysian English in terms of diglossia in comparison with Standard British English.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This study aims to examine the roles of different English varieties in Malaysia from a sociolinguistic perspective: language choice, factors and language attitudes. This chapter focuses on the methodology to address the following three research questions:

1. What is the university students' language choice between the H and L varieties in different communicative settings?

2. What are the factors that have contributed to the different English varieties used by the students?

3. What are the students' language attitudes towards different English varieties?

In order to answer these research questions, a questionnaire survey was designed to elicit data from UTAR English Language degree course students to investigate the two distinct varieties of English Language used by the respondents.

3.2 Population and Sampling

For the purpose of investigating the diglossic situation of English Language used among university students in Malaysia, a significant sample of undergraduates in UTAR was chosen. Students who were pursuing their degree in UTAR English Language course were selected as respondents because they were considered as the person who best aware

of the vital need to be literate in English in order to achieve a reasonable measure of success in their daily communicative encounters and both their academic results and careers in future.

Due to their course major, the participants were believed to fulfill the criteria of the research where they have attained a certain level of English proficiency and most importantly, there was a higher possibility and frequency of their using English rather than other languages to communicate in every situation, particularly in informal settings.

The sampling technique used in this study was purposive sampling or selective sampling. All the undergraduates of the English Language course in UTAR were chosen as respondents because among all the university students in Malaysia, they are more closely related to the language.

3.3 Instrumentation

Three research questions were designed to examine the language choice of the selected university students between different English varieties, the factors, as well as language attitudes of the respondents towards different English varieties. Questionnaire technique was used to elicit data from them.

The survey gathered some personal details and background information from each of the respondents. Most of the actual items in the survey, however, were multiple choice questions or multiple-choice Likert questions. The Likert scale was a five point rubric

with a range of possible responses from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree", with "neutral" as a middle option. Slightly different in this study, instead of using "neutral", an option of "not sure" was used as the middle choice to indicate uncertainty.

3.4 Procedure and Time Frame

The data collection period had spread over three months and it included the time where the questionnaire was designed and modified. The particular set of survey questionnaires were gathered from December 2010 to January 2011 from the target respondents. The findings in this research could be used to represent the responses of the well-educated university students in Malaysia.

The survey questionnaires were to be obtained from the respondents to justify the findings. The results would be calculated in the form of percentages using the following formula:

$$\text{Percentage} = \frac{\text{Number of students on the particular statement}}{\text{Total number of students who answer the questionnaire}} \times 100\%$$

$$\text{E.g. Percentage of students who agree on the first question} = \frac{25}{100} \times 100\%$$

$$= 25\%$$

It should be noted that this research was exploratory in nature using only simple statistical procedures and that the data will perhaps be further investigated and analyzed using more complex statistical procedures in the future.

3.5 Analysis Plan

The topics in the questionnaires were broadly fallen into two categories: (i) non-linguistic (subject's gender, age and their year of study in university) and (ii) linguistic (language choice between distinct English varieties, factors, and language attitudes)

In the linguistic part, there were another three sub-sections consisting of ten questions each, designed to answer the three research questions. The feedbacks responded to the survey questionnaire would be analyzed in terms of the three sections.

Section A was aimed to affirm Malaysia as a diglossic speech community. Besides that, it also intended to find out the respondents' knowledge and ability to recognize and distinguish between the two distinct English varieties as well as their own evaluation on differentiating and using the two varieties appropriately.

Section B was designed in order to clarify the language choice of the respondents between Standard English and Malaysian English and the factors of the choice. This section intended to show whether or not Malaysian university students have the ability to switch appropriately between Standard English and Malaysian according to situations. In

addition, the factors which have contributed to their choice of using a certain variety when communicating would be revealed.

Section C was expected to show the respondents' attitudes towards Standard English and Malaysian English. It is crucial to find out how the youth in Malaysia regard the different English varieties that have existed in their country because it would show whether or not the continuation of diglossic relationship between Standard English and Malaysian English is possible.

3.6 Validity and Reliability

The instrument used achieved high levels of validity as it was content related as well as criterion related. The questionnaire consisted of three sections which were all relevant to answer the three research questions. It included only what were supposed to be measured in the research and did not include any unrelated rhetorical questions. The instrument used was criterion related because it fulfilled particular criteria which were concurrent and predictive. The study was mainly to survey diglossia of English Language in Malaysia and the survey questionnaires were given to students who had just entered the university (Year 1) and concurrently given to students who were about to graduate (Year 3). The results gained from the research were predictive as all the respondents were from the same degree course.

The methodology used achieved a certain level of reliability because it maintained the consistency of measuring. The results and findings of the study were based primarily on a questionnaire conducted on students from UTAR English Language degree course. It would be considered reliable due to the controlled settings and the research manipulations. The subjectivity of personal judgement was minimized.

3.7 Assumptions

It was assumed that in formal situations such as interacting with the lecturers or someone who is superior or giving a speech in public, Malaysian youth tend to use Standard English. However, when they interact with their peers outside the classroom or chatting online in the absence of adults or teachers, the Malaysian variety would be chosen.

This paper would present the language choice between the Standard and Malaysian varieties of English by Malaysian undergraduates. This included the language choice in different situations; in various relationships between participants of interactions, the dissimilarity of the medium employed, and the different purpose of communication etc. It was believed that the respondents would code-switch between the two English varieties for different reasons according to the circumstances.

As for the language attitudes, it was not assumable as it has depended very much on personal preference. The respondents' language attitudes may differ as their interest or

perceptions change over time. That is why future studies would be needed to keep up with changing attitudes so information could be continually updated.

3.8 Conclusion

Based on the assumptions that the respondents' language choice and language attitudes could provide both social and linguistic information, this study was hoped to provide insights into understanding the language choice of Malaysian youths, the reasons and the language attitudes towards different linguistics varieties in a multilingual and multiracial nature of Malaysian society.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the findings obtained from the survey questionnaire are shown and analyzed in details. The first part of this chapter describes the respondents' demographic profile and followed by the second part showing the findings on different English varieties in Malaysia. Next, the respondents' language choice between the two varieties in different communicative settings is covered in order to answer the first research question of this study. The fourth part seeks to find out the factors that affect the respondents' language choice as set forth in the second research question. The analysis for the last part of this chapter answers the third research question of this study which is to show the language attitudes of the respondents towards the two distinct English varieties.

4.2 Respondent Profile

The findings reported in this study represent feedback from a total of 100 selected respondents pursuing the English Language degree course in Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman. Of this total, 78% or 78 respondents were female while the remaining 22% or 22 respondents were male. The age of the respondents ranged from 19 to 26 years old. The majority are between 20 to 22 years old (82%).
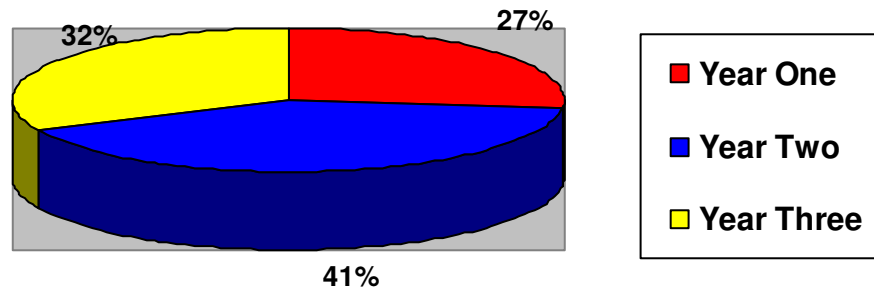
Figure 1: Year of study of 100 Respondents

Of the 100 target respondents from the English Language course, 41% of them are Year Two students, followed by 32% Year Three students and 27% Year One students.

4.3 Different English Varieties in Malaysia

4.3.1 English Varieties Recognition

The first five questions in section A was designed to find out the respondents' ability to recognize the two different English varieties which have existed in their community. A conversation comprising of five sentences was provided and the respondents were required to state of which variety they thought each of the sentences was. In the whole questionnaire, we have the so-called "correct answer" only for these five questions. For instance, one of the sentences in the conversation was "Chin Chai lah! Makan anything also can lah!". For this question, the expected answer was the L variety. If the respondents provided a different answer, it would be considered incorrect.

In this section, all the respondents got at least three of the five questions right. A good percentage of 71% students got all of the five questions right and 26% of them got four questions right.
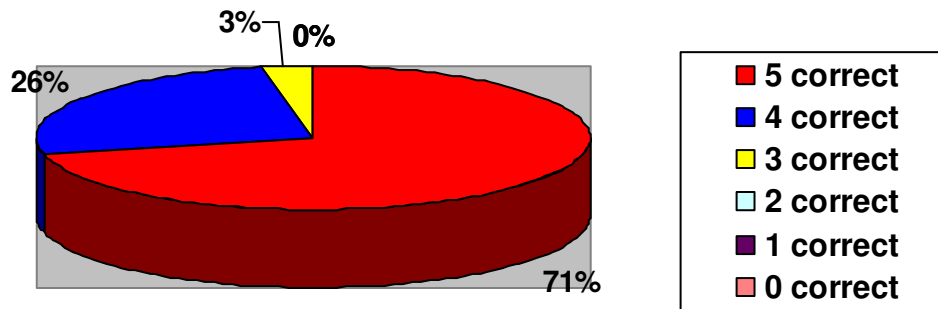

Figure 2: English Varieties Recognition

The results had shown that the English Language course students did have the ability to differentiate between the two varieties of English and they were well aware of the existence of the different English varieties around them.

4.3.2 Knowledgeable and Appropriate Expressions of English Varieties

For the following questions in section A, their knowledge on the two English varieties were tested by answering the questions like whether or not they agree that the H and L varieties are similar and can be clearly differentiated. 81% of the respondents did not agree that L variety (Malaysian English) is similar to H variety (Standard English) in

terms of grammar, pronunciation and vocabulary and 89% of the respondents thought
that the two distinct varieties of English could be clearly differentiated.
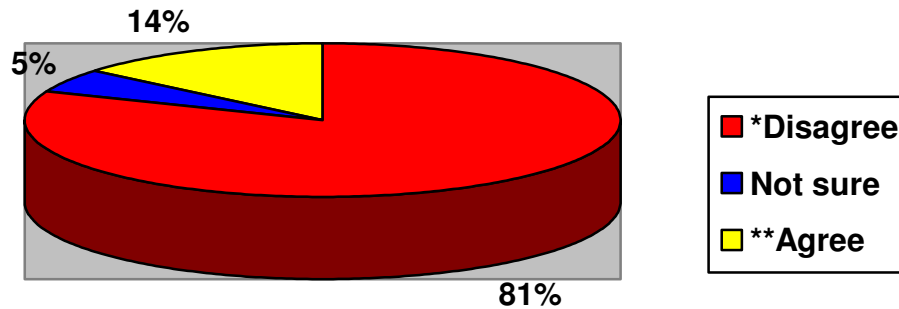
Figure 3: Similarity between the H and L varieties.

The findings showed that the distinct differences between the two varieties of
English in Malaysia had been recognized by not only professional sociolinguists but also
the ordinary young speakers of English in Malaysia.

The last few questions in this section aimed to let the respondents do personal
judgment in terms of their knowledge and appropriate expressions of the two English
varieties. When asked about their own ability and knowledge they thought they had on
the two varieties, 86% respondents agreed that they could recognize and were aware of
the varieties used by people whom they were communicating with. 25% of the

respondents however thought that they were sometimes confused with the H and L varieties and 11% of the respondents were not sure about this. 82% of the respondents thought that they could use the H and L varieties appropriately depending on the situation while 12% of the respondents disagreed.
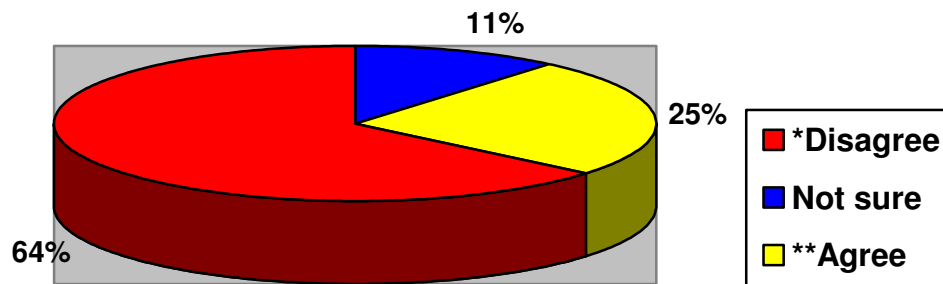
*Disagree includes "Strongly Disagree" and "Disagree".
** Agree includes "Strongly Agree" and "Agree".

Figure 4: Confusion over the H and L varieties.
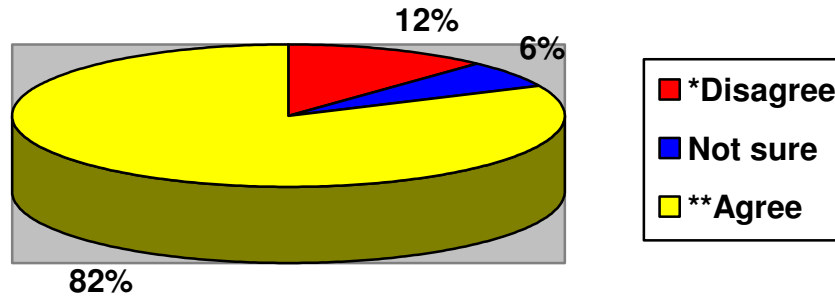
12%   **6%**

■ *Disagree
■ Not sure
□ **Agree

82%

*Disagree includes "Strongly Disagree" and "Disagree".
** Agree includes "Strongly Agree" and "Agree".

Figure 5: Appropriate Expressions of the H and L varieties.

The data gained from this section had clearly shown that most respondents were confident in their own ability in recognizing the two English varieties as well as using them appropriately according to situations.
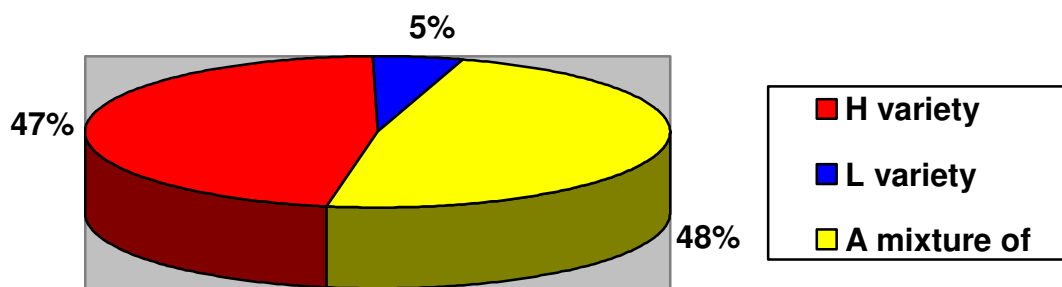
4.4 Language Choice

In the next section, the language choice of the respondents was revealed. Firstly, the focus was on the varieties of English used by the English Language degree course students in their daily lives. 97% of the respondents expressed that rather than using solely the H variety or the L variety, they use both varieties of English to communicate.

2%
1%

- 🟥 **I use only the H variety**
- 🟦 **I use only the L variety**
- 🟨 **I use both varieties**

97%
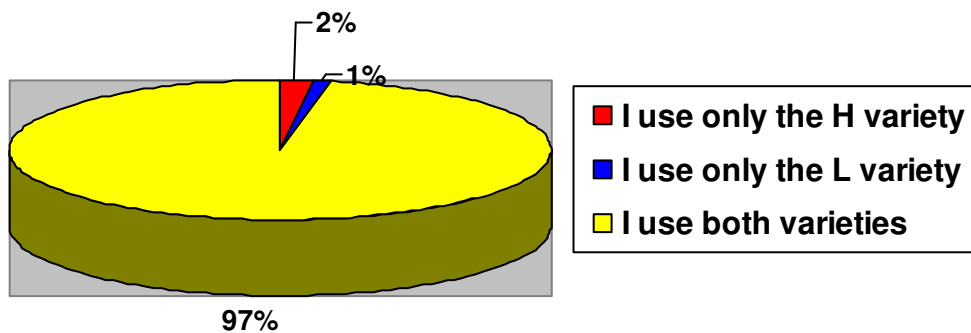
Figure 6: The Use of English Varieties in Daily Lives.

And next when asked about of which variety do most of their lecturers use when teaching, their answers showed an interesting outcome where 47% of them thought it was the H variety and 48% of them thought it was a mixture of both varieties. This suggested that many of the lecturers , though not the majority , did not use fully Standard English when teaching even though they were teaching the students who were English Language majors.

Figure 7: The English Varieties Used by Lecturers in UTAR.

The following questions focused on investigating the language choice of students in different communicative settings with different addressees and purposes of communication. It could almost be predicted that in certain formal situations, the H variety would be used. For instance, 92% of them chose the H variety when they were asked to give a speech or presentation in public and 95% of them used the H variety when doing assignments. As for the informal situations like chatting online, 46% respondents used the L variety while 50% respondents used a mixture of both varieties.

95%

H variety
L variety
A mixture of both

0%

5%
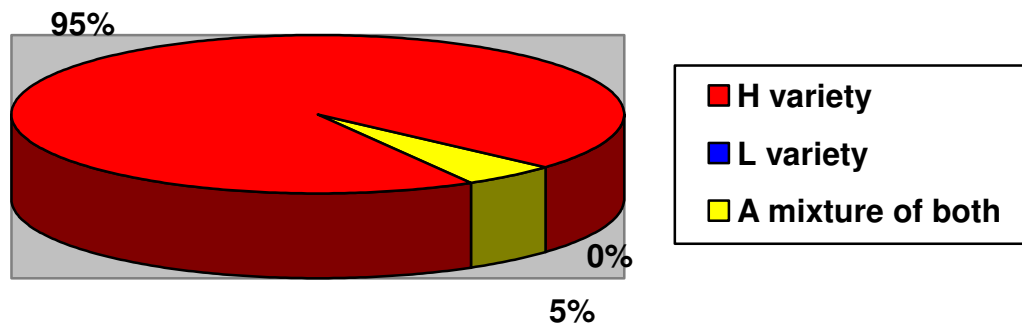
Figure 8: The English Varieties Used in Assignments.

People tend to use different types of language when communicating with different individuals so it was also in expectations that 86% of the respondents used the H variety when communicating with someone who is superior and 41% respondents used the L variety when communicating with someone who is close. 56% of the respondents reported that they used a mixture of both varieties when communicate with someone who is intimate. It was assumed that because they were English Language students who were expected to speak standard and good English, so even when they were with someone whom they were very familiar with, they did not use only the L variety but a mixture of both varieties.
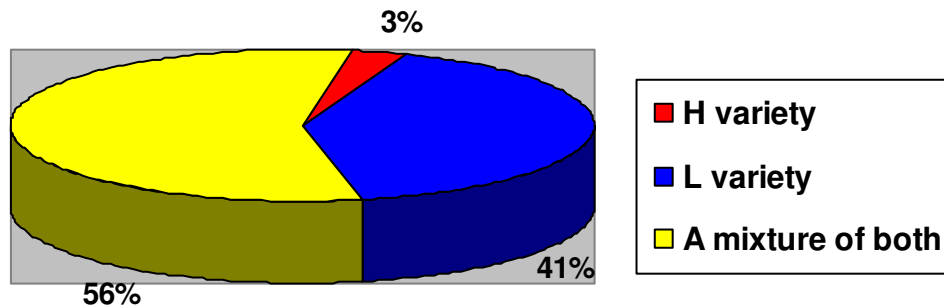
Figure 9: The English Varieties Used with Someone Close.

As for which variety they usually use in class with their classmates, 63% of the respondents used a mixture of both varieties, followed by 32% respondents who used the L variety and 5% respondents who used the H variety. Such a situation was explainable because the classroom was still considered a formal place where Standard English was expected to be spoken by the students. However, classmates were considered as someone who were close and that explained why the L variety was chosen. In such situations, a mixture of both varieties was a better choice rather than using solely either one variety.

The same goes to the situations where the respondents were asked which variety they usually use when they were having a meeting with the society members. For this question, 60% of them reported using a mixture of both varieties while 31% reported using the H variety and 9% the L variety. Meetings were formal situations, but the society members were someone whom they were familiar with. That was why most respondents chose to use a mixture of both varieties.
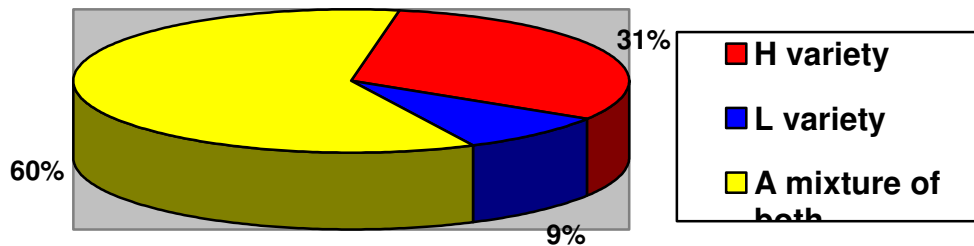
Figure 10: The English Varieties Used in Meetings with Society Members.

4.5 Factors of Language Choice

The last question in this section aimed to expose the factors as to what influenced the respondents' choice of using a certain variety when communicating. Differing from other multiple-choice questions in this section, six options of factors were provided and the respondents could select more than one answer for this single question.

The most influential factor that the respondents chose was the addressee. 84 respondents thought that the relationship between the participants of interaction affected them the most in using different varieties to communicate. As discussed earlier, people tend to modify their language when communicating with people of different status and it depends very much on the closeness of relationship as well.
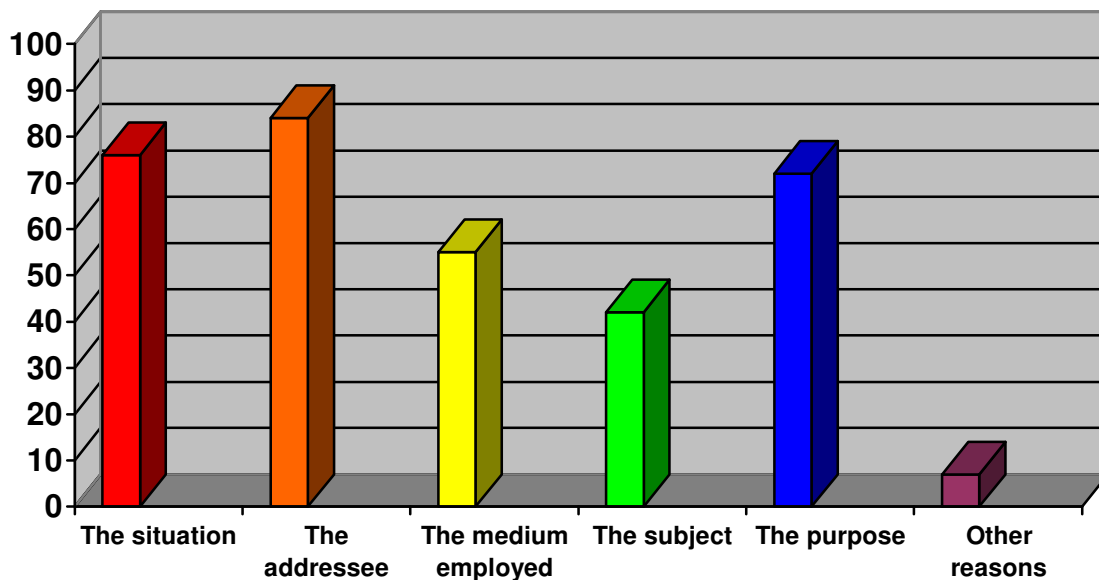
Figure 11: Factors of Language Choice

The second influential factor chosen by the respondents was the situation. As shown in the earlier section, the respondents used the H variety in formal situations like giving a speech in public and used the L variety in informal occasions like chatting with peers online. 76 respondents agreed that the physical environment of communication was an important factor for them to switch between the two distinct varieties.

It was also found that quite a number of respondents used different varieties of English depending on the purpose of communication. For instance, when the purpose was to report something important, they might use the H variety but when the purpose was to tell a joke among close friends, the L variety might be chosen. Slightly more than half respondents thought that the medium employed was influential and only 42 respondents thought that the topic of discourse was one of the factors which affected their use of

different varieties. There are seven respondents who suggested that there were some other factors which affected their choice of using a certain variety which were not provided in the list.

4.6 Language Attitudes

In the last section of the questionnaire, the respondents' language attitudes towards the H and L varieties of English Language were highlighted. Firstly, the focus was placed on their current university life. 51% of the respondents thought that UTAR students were expected to use only the H variety in class but 37% of students disagreed.
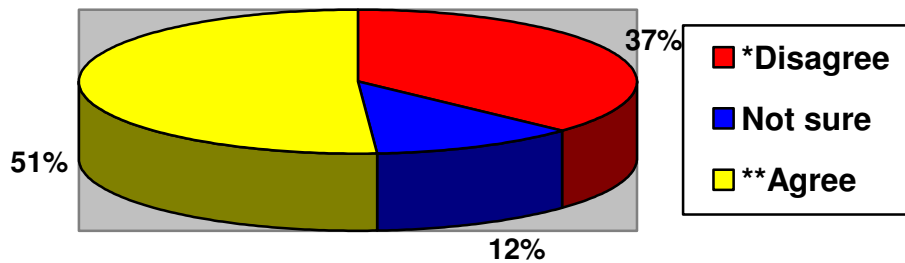
37% ■ *Disagree
      ■ Not sure
51% □ **Agree
12%

*Disagree includes "Strongly Disagree" and "Disagree".
** Agree includes "Strongly Agree" and "Agree".

Figure 12: Expected Variety in Class (H variety)

Majority of the respondents (92%) agreed that lecturers should use the H variety as a medium of instruction and they (48%) did not agree that they understood better when lecturers taught using the L variety. Only 21% of the respondents agreed that it enhanced their understanding when the lecturers taught using the L variety while 31% of them were not even sure whether the use of the L variety during teaching helped.
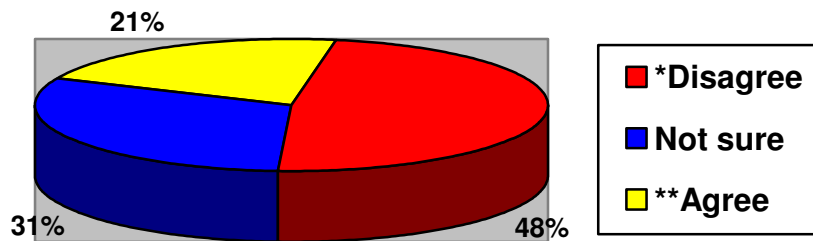
*Disagree includes "Strongly Disagree" and "Disagree".
** Agree includes "Strongly Agree" and "Agree".

Figure 13: Enhancement of Understanding (L variety)

93% of the respondents agreed that the H variety was more appropriate when they were studying English Language in UTAR and 98% or the respondents agreed that the H variety was important in formal communication. Still, 68% of the respondents thought that the L variety was a more convenient spoken variety as compared to the H variety and

55% of the respondents agreed that the L variety was considered as an acceptable variety
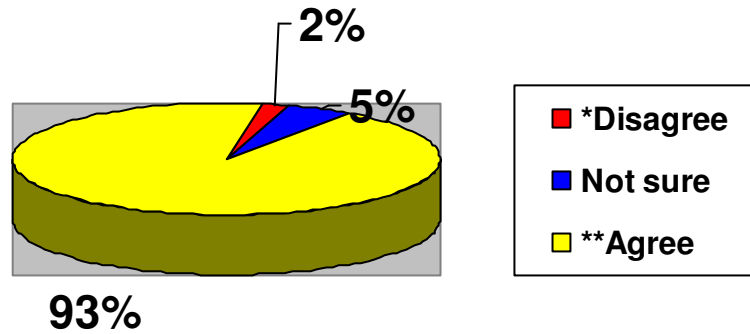
of English for Malaysian students.

*Disagree includes "Strongly Disagree" and "Disagree".
** Agree includes "Strongly Agree" and "Agree".

Figure 14: Appropriate Variety for English Language Students (H variety)
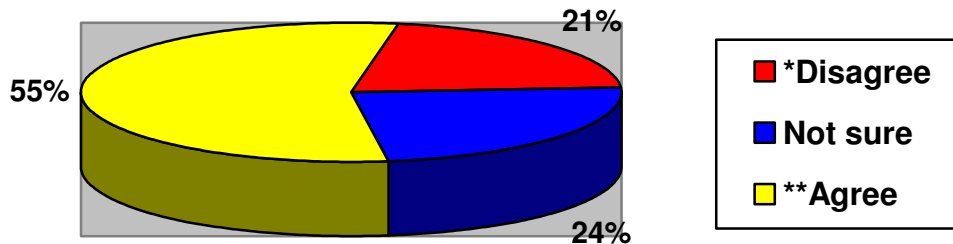
*Disagree includes "Strongly Disagree" and "Disagree".
** Agree includes "Strongly Agree" and "Agree".

Figure 15: Acceptable Variety for Malaysian Students (L variety)

As for identity, 39% of the respondents agreed that the L variety was more suitable than the H variety to represent national identity and 27% of them disagreed. For this question, a high percentage of the respondents (34%) were not sure which variety was more suitable to represent their national identity.
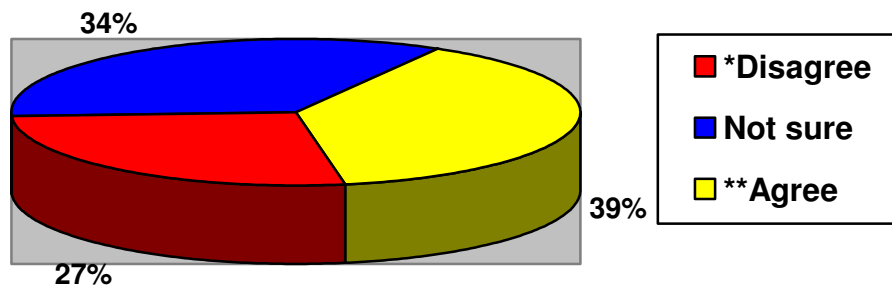
*Disagree includes "Strongly Disagree" and "Disagree".
** Agree includes "Strongly Agree" and "Agree".

Figure 16: Representation of National Identity (L variety)

Lastly, the focus was on the language attitudes of youngsters towards different English varieties in Malaysia. 77% of the respondents agreed that the L variety is replacing the H variety to become the more widely spoken variety among Malaysians, especially among the youth. However when asked which variety they personally like better, 51% of them disagreed that they like the L variety better than the H variety and 33% of the respondents were not even sure which variety they themselves like better.
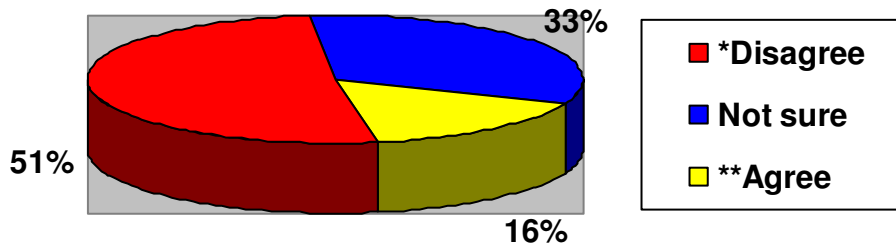
■	*Disagree
■	Not sure
□	**Agree

33%

51%

16%

*Disagree includes "Strongly Disagree" and "Disagree".
** Agree includes "Strongly Agree" and "Agree".

Figure 17: Personal Preference on Different English Varieties (L variety)

4.7 Conclusion

The findings showed that the English Language students switch between the H

variety and the L variety of English for several factors. It followed from the findings of

their language choice that Standard English and Malaysian English are used for two

different functions. In other words, the relationship between the two varieties is diglossic.

As for their language attitudes, perhaps due to their course majors, most respondents have

a positive attitude towards Standard English rather than towards Malaysian English in all

aspects.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

5.1 Introduction

In this final chapter, the findings gathered in the previous chapter are summarized and some major findings are pointed out and discussed in details. Besides, the limitations of this study are recognised and at the same time, recommendations for future research are listed so that this study could be refined. Lastly, conclusions for the whole research project are drawn from the data obtained in order to answer the three research questions as well as to examine whether or not the objectives of the study have been achieved.

5.2 Summary of Findings

The findings showed that the proficient young speakers of English in Malaysia use two sharply different kinds of English depending on the circumstances. The Standard British English is used for formal interactions as the H variety, whereas Malaysian English is used for informal interactions as the L variety. Both the varieties of English complement a function each other therefore the relationship between Standard English and Malaysian English has been proved to be diglossic.

There were several factors that have contributed to the respondents' choice of using a certain variety when communicating. Code-switching between the two varieties of English took place depending mostly on the interlocutors, the situations and the purposes of communication.

The results revealed that the university students in Malaysia thought that the Standard British English was more suitable as a language of communication and education whereas the Malaysian English was more suitable to be used to represent national identity and closeness of relationship. From the findings of the respondents' language attitudes, the conclusion corresponded to the concept of diglossia that the H variety is used in literacy, education, and government, while the L variety maintains value as a marker of membership of a peer or ethnic group (Spolsky, 1998).

5.3 Discussion of Major Findings

There were several significant findings found from the survey which should be highlighted. One of them was the university students' recognition and knowledge on the two varieties of English. A great majority of the respondents did have the ability to differentiate the two distinct English varieties around them and also, most of them were confident in their own ability in distinguishing and using the varieties appropriately according to circumstances.

From the percentages, one could assume that majority of the university students did understand that reaching a certain level of English proficiency was important and it was most probable that such feelings arose when they have chosen the English Language degree course. As mentioned by Muniandy (2010), rather than perceiving the L variety (Malaysian English) as an obstacle to master the language, the recognition of Malaysian

English by educational bodies may perhaps be of great value as the students acquire and recognise it in a cultural context which is most familiar to them.

It should also be noted that most lecturers in UTAR used a mixture of both varieties when teaching, but a great number of students did not think that the L variety was suitable to be used as a medium of instruction. As discussed earlier, English Language students require a good grasp of language knowledge to help them develop the target language. English teachers act as language models for students. In order to expose students to the correct use of forms and functions of English, they themselves have to use proper and standard language so that students can use it productively too. According to Munir Shuib (2008), quality input in the classroom demands a strong command of English on the part of the teacher.

Since the L variety is considered as the marker of membership, perhaps some lecturers used the L variety to establish relationship with the students or maybe they thought that it might help the students in enhancing their understanding. From the language attitudes survey, however, showed that majority students disagreed they understood better when the lecturers taught using the L variety.

This suggested that if lecturers do not use proper and standard language, especially when teaching language students, it may have an adverse effect on their students in terms of not just the students' acquisition of the target language but also their motivation to learn the language. As Hamidah (2005) pointed out, the ability to use

language effectively in teaching would not only help students understand the subject better but would also lead to many other positive traits such as higher interest and motivation.

The students' preference between the two varieties was another focus of the study. From the feedback of the respondents, it showed that more than half students did not like Malaysian English better than Standard English. In fact, even in some informal settings like chatting online or communicating with someone who is close, many respondents did not use only the L variety but a mixture of both varieties although they agreed that the L variety was a more convenient spoken variety. Thus, from the findings we could assume that there were a lot of people who realized the higher importance of Standard English but at the same time more used to speak the Malaysian English or another assumption was that many students actually like Malaysian English as much as Standard English.

5.4 Limitations of the Study

It is inevitable that each research has its own flaw. This research paper has no exception as well of having its own limitations which may hold back the breadth and depth of the study. It is important for limitations to be recognised and learnt because only then there will be room for improvement.

The participants of the study were all university students majoring in Bachelor of Arts (Hons) English Language, in the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, UTAR.

However this sample group was not chosen randomly and that was why the results produced could not be used to generalize to the population. The results gained from the research were insufficient to represent the whole population of university students in Malaysia because the findings might be unique to the relative participants included in the study.

The fixed and structured setting used in the research was highly possible to limit the outcome of the research. This research had a structured format where the questions in the survey were almost all close-ended questions, with there being very little room for grey areas and uncertainty. However, for the study of human languages, it is a lot more complex than just a simple yes or no response.

Another shortcoming of this research was the use of one research technique exclusively, which was solely relying on the questionnaire. Survey questionnaires might not specify all the criteria one needs for a comprehensive sociolinguistic research. It is quite important to go beyond the exclusive use of questionnaires since self-reporting may not reflect the actual language usage and language attitudes of the users. However, due to the time constraint and all the other restrictions, this research has used the questionnaire technique thoroughly.

5.5 Recommendations for Future Research

According to Walonick (2005), there are almost always ways that a study could be improved or refined. Here are some recommendations for this study which aim to

improve future related researches to ensure greater accuracy of data and higher validity and reliability.

As mentioned in the earlier chapter, this research was only using simple statistical procedures and small sample group. For future research, perhaps a larger sample size of population should be employed along with more complex statistical procedures in order to enhance the validity of the study. With a larger sample group of various respondents from diverse backgrounds, the results gained and knowledge produced from the study are believed to be able to apply and generalize to the whole population. By using a more complete statistical procedure, the data obtained will be more accurate and reliable.

Due to the time constraint, this study was somehow lacking the verification of data. Future researches are suggested to do retesting and refinement to the results obtained from the survey as the requirements for a successful statistical confirmation of results are very stringent, with very few study comprehensively proving a hypothesis or phenomenon. There is usually some ambiguity which requires another investment of time and resources to be committed to fine-tune the results.

For the similar restrictions, this study used solely the questionnaire technique throughout the whole research. If time allowed, the methodology for the research is strongly recommended to include a combination of well-tested techniques for eliciting sociolinguistic information, incorporating sociolinguistic interviews, participant

observation as well as questionnaires. It is firmly believed that the combination of these complimentary methods will enhance the validity of the analysis.

5.6 Conclusion

It is not an impression but a foregone conclusion that Malaysian university students use different varieties of English in different social contexts for different reasons.

From the findings of the study we can tell that different varieties of language are appropriate for different communicative settings. Problems like miscommunication and misunderstanding may arise for speakers who are not familiar with the various context of language use. It is essential for students, especially those who are language majors, to realize the main objective of master a language is not to acquire native speaker's competency but rather to be intelligible among international English speakers and those within their community (Muniandy, 2010).

It is also important that students must be made to realize the importance of Standard English in academic and formal settings; but at the same time be conscious of the communicative function of Malaysian English. Not only students but every speakers of English should understand that dialects are not inferior languages and that they should be respected because they do have social functions of facilitating understanding and fostering ties.

As Knowles (2002) pointed out, the way we speak English has certainly adopted many features of British usage, for the reason that it is the first variety of English which Malaysians came into contact with. Apparently, however, Malaysians do not sound remotely like English people when they speak English nor they are encouraged to do so. What does seem to be the case is that Malaysians are using English for practical reasons, and assimilating it into Malaysian culture (Knowles, 2002).

Many different English varieties, which are called World Englishes, are spoken all over the world currently. Malaysian English being one of the world Englishes, has an important role as an inter-ethnic lingua franca in the Malaysia community. Since language is closely related to identity, even if Standard English is considered to be of higher status, the language maintenance of Malaysian English should not be neglected as it is the language that defines our national identity and connects us to our community.

From the language attitudes survey, it showed that the well-educated university students seemed to have positive attitudes towards Standard English rather than Malaysian English. At the same time, however, many of them think that Malaysian English is replacing Standard English to become the more widely spoken English variety among Malaysians, especially the youth. Therefore, the future of English in Malaysia is likely to continue with the use of two distinct varieties by Malaysians.

According to Ho (2005), no one can actually make a claim of what good English is because language is something on which no one has a monopoly. As a member of the

community, we should not have an inferiority complex – our English is not that bad after all.

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FACULTY OF ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCE

Dear Respondents,

 I am Joey Low, a Year 3 Trimester 1 student from the Bachelor of Arts (Hons) English Language in UTAR. This questionnaire is designed to **study the phenomenon of diglossia** among university students in Malaysia by comparing the English varieties used by UTAR English language course students.

 Diglossia is a stable language situation in which two distinct varieties of the same language are used in one community, with one regarded as a high (or H) variety and the other as a low (or L) variety. Basically, the varieties of English language used in Malaysia can be classified into two. The H variety of English used in our country is the Standard British English which is taught formally in schools. On the other hand, the L variety refers to Malaysia Colloquial English (Malaysian English) which is widely used in informal situations and acquired informally.

 The information provided by respondents will enhance better understanding of the current diglossic situation of English language that has existed in our communities. Your honest and truthful responses are greatly appreciated. Your responses will only be used for academic purposes and will be kept strictly confidential.

 Thank you for your cooperation.

Gender:　F / M

Age:

Year of Study: Y_____S_____

Section A: Different English Varieties in Malaysia

Below is a conversation between two Malaysian university students. Of which variety do you think each of the following sentence are? Please state clearly H (Standard English) or L (Malaysian English)

1.　"I am so hungry. Is there anything to eat? I'm starving here. "　　　(　　　　)
2.　"Chin chai lah! Makan anything also can lah!"　　　(　　　　)
3.　"Hey, just now I heard we will have replacement class tomorrow."　　　(　　　　)
4.　"Where got? Really ah?"　　　(　　　　)
5.　"Not sure leh. You go and ask course rep lah!"　　　(　　　　)

Please indicate to what extent you agree with the following statements.

6.　L variety (Malaysian English) is similar to H variety (Standard English) in terms of grammar, pronunciation and vocabulary.

　　Strongly disagree　　　Disagree　　　Not sure　　　Agree　　　Strongly agree

7.　H (Standard English) and L (Malaysian English) varieties can be clearly differentiated.

　　Strongly disagree　　　Disagree　　　Not sure　　　Agree　　　Strongly agree

8.　I can recognize and am aware of the varieties used by people whom I am communicating with.

　　Strongly disagree　　　Disagree　　　Not sure　　　Agree　　　Strongly agree

9.　Sometimes I am confused with the H variety (Standard English) and L variety (Malaysian English).

　　Strongly disagree　　　Disagree　　　Not sure　　　Agree　　　Strongly agree

10.　I can use H variety (Standard English) and L variety (Malaysian English) appropriately depending on the situation.

　　Strongly disagree　　　Disagree　　　Not sure　　　Agree　　　Strongly agree

Section B: Language Choice and Reasons.

Circle the most appropriate answer which indicates your language choice and reasons.

1. Do you communicate with everyone in any situation with ONLY one variety?

   a) Yes, I use only H variety (Standard English).

   b) Yes, I use only L variety (Malaysian English).

   c) No, I use both varieties.

2. Which variety do most of your lecturers in UTAR use when teaching?

   a) H variety (Standard English)

   b) L variety (Malaysian English)

   c) A mixture of both

3. Which variety do you usually use in class with your EL course mates?

   a) H variety (Standard English)

   b) L variety (Malaysian English)

   c) A mixture of both

4. Which variety do you usually use when you are giving a speech/presentation in public?

   a) H variety (Standard English)

   b) L variety (Malaysian English)

   c) A mixture of both

5. Which variety do you usually use when you are chatting online?

   a) H variety (Standard English)

   b) L variety (Malaysian English)

   c) A mixture of both

6. Which variety do you usually use when you are doing your assignment?

   a) H variety (Standard English)

   b) L variety (Malaysian English)

   c) A mixture of both

7. Which variety do you usually use when you are communicating with someone who is superior to you?

   a) H variety (Standard English)

   b) L variety (Malaysian English)

   c) A mixture of both

8. Which variety do you usually use when you are communicating with someone who is close to you?

a) H variety (Standard English)

b) L variety (Malaysian English)

c) A mixture of both

9. Which variety do you usually use when you are having a meeting with your society members?

a) H variety (Standard English)

b) L variety (Malaysian English)

c) A mixture of both

10. What influence(s) your choice of using a certain variety when communicating?

(You may select more than one answer)

a) The situation (physical environment)

b) The addressee (relationship between the participants of interaction)

c) The medium employed (speech or writing)

d) The subject (topic of discourse)

e) The purpose of communication (to inform, to tell jokes etc.)

f) Other reasons.

Section C: Language Attitudes

Please indicate to what extent you agree with the following statements.

1. UTAR students are expected to use only the H variety (Standard English) in class.

| Strongly disagree | Disagree | Not sure | Agree | Strongly agree |

2. Lecturers should use the H variety (Standard English) as a medium of instruction.

| Strongly disagree | Disagree | Not sure | Agree | Strongly agree |

3. It enhances my understanding when lecturers teach using the L variety (Malaysian English).

| Strongly disagree | Disagree | Not sure | Agree | Strongly agree |

4. The H variety (Standard English) is more appropriate when I am studying English Language in UTAR.

   Strongly disagree   Disagree   Not sure   Agree   Strongly agree

5. The H variety (Standard English) is important in formal communication.

   Strongly disagree   Disagree   Not sure   Agree   Strongly agree

6. The L variety (Malaysian English) is a more convenient spoken variety as compared to the H variety (Standard English).

   Strongly disagree   Disagree   Not sure   Agree   Strongly agree

7. The L variety (Malaysian English) is more suitable than the H variety (Standard English) to represent national identity.

   Strongly disagree   Disagree   Not sure   Agree   Strongly agree

8. The L variety (Malaysian English) is considered as an acceptable variety of English for Malaysian students.

   Strongly disagree   Disagree   Not sure   Agree   Strongly agree

9. L variety (Malaysian English) is replacing H variety (Standard English) to become the more widely spoken variety among Malaysians, especially the youth.

   Strongly disagree   Disagree   Not sure   Agree   Strongly agree

10. I personally like the L variety (Malaysian English) better than the H variety (Standard English).

    Strongly disagree   Disagree   Not sure   Agree   Strongly agree

------------End of Questionnaire------------

Thank you for your participation. Have a nice day.