

WORLD ENGLISHES AND MISCOMMUNICATION IN VIEW OF ENGLISH AS AN INTERNATIONAL LANGUAGE

SUMMARY OF LECTURES ON MALAYSIAN ENGLISH-Azirah Hashim

The lectures are presented according to the following five topics:

1. History, people and role of English
2. Lexical borrowing
3. Grammar
4. Paralinguistic features and sociocultural differences
5. Pronunciation

Malaysia is a multi-racial and multi-religious country with three dominant ethnic groups, Malays, Chinese and Indians. The English used in Malaysia reflects the experiences of the people living in the country and can be considered different from others in that it has emerged to suit the culture and the identity of the people. People live and interact across the different languages or across varieties of the same language. In multilingual Malaysia where a considerably large portion of the people are bilingual, code-switching is a common feature of spoken communication. Many, especially in the urban areas, are bilingual in Malay and English or multilingual in Chinese/Tamil-Malay-English, the result of the national education policy which stipulates that the main medium of instruction of education is Malay with English as a compulsory taught second language.

The first lecture provides information on the languages used in Malaysia, the different ethnic groups and the role of English in Malaysia. A brief history of English in Malaysia is given including the British colonial period prior to independence. The languages used in Malaysia are described as well as the normal repertoire of the people.

The second lecture looks at lexical borrowing which is the use of special words in Malaysian English. The borrowing of words from one's native language appears to be the most obvious ways in which ethnic identity is marked in Malaysian English. One example is the use of Malay words for food. These words are often untranslatable into English and may be from the material domain, on social rituals or ceremonies, religion and institutions, or about intangible items, values, ideals and attitudes.

The third lecture is on grammar in which simplification devices such as over-generalisation, omission, reduction, substitution and restructuring are explained. Examples from extracts from short stories and radio advertisements are included to illustrate these five types of simplification. The use of question form with omission of 'do' and overgeneralisation of word order is described. The use of 'can' which is used with a number of different functions is discussed as well as the omission of connectors and object pronouns. Particles which are commonly found in Malaysian English such as 'ah' and 'lah' are also included.

The fourth lecture talks about para-linguistic features and socio-cultural differences. What is considered normal practice in homes is mentioned, as well as how respect is conveyed in greetings and the role of the different body parts. Forms of address from the native languages are often used in Malaysian English and are retained to show respect and ethnic belonging. Other words used which can only be understood in the cultural context of Malaysia are also discussed.

The final lecture looks at some aspects of pronunciation in Malaysian English. Vowels in Malaysian English are described indicating that no distinction is made between certain pairs of monophthong vowels which are distinct in some other varieties of English. The lecture also includes stressed syllable in Malaysian English which may cause intelligibility problems with others speakers.

LIST OF REFERENCES

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