English in Malaysia: Current Use and Status offers an account of the English language used in present-day West and East Malaysia and its status anchored in different linguistic, social and educational domains. After an Introduction giving a bird’s eye view of the status of English in Malaysia, the eight main chapters offer case studies revolving around four themes:

1. linguistic features, with special focus on pronunciation and language contact;
2. language attitudes;
3. English in on-line discourse; and
4. English and language policies.

The chapters cover original data and topics, seeking to draw an accurate portrait of Malaysian English, a non-native variety of postcolonial English that is currently developing its pronunciation, grammar, lexis and distinct identity.

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Preface

The use of English in postcolonial countries such as Malaysia is a fascinating topic for scholars from diverse disciplines as well as for teachers and professionals with a keen interest in the English language. The main title of this book, *English in Malaysia*, reflects the pervasive role of English throughout Malaysian society. This is especially the case in urban areas, where the presence of English originated from the arrival of British administrators from the East India Company in the late 18th century, but in fact English is a second or foreign language for the majority of Malaysians. Indeed, the linguistic landscape of contemporary Malaysia cannot be fully described without substantial reference to the presence of English due to its sociohistorical, political, sociocultural and linguistic significance.

The subtitle of the book, *Current use and status*, signals that its main focus is on describing how the language is used in everyday life and also its status in present-day Malaysia. For this reason, no single theoretical framework has been adopted across the entire volume. After the introduction, which provides an overview of the status of English in Malaysia, the book is divided into four sections focusing on four central themes (linguistic features, language attitudes, Malaysian English online, and education); finally, an afterword offers a prognosis for the future of English in Malaysia. Overall, the eight main chapters seek to draw an accurate portrait of Malaysian English (ME), a non-native variety of English that is currently developing its own pronunciation, grammar and lexis but whose development is at the same time constantly subject to global influences.

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CHAPTER 1

English in Malaysia: Background, Status and Use

Toshiko Yamaguchi and David Deterding

Introduction

Malaysia is a multi-ethnic and multilingual country that has been independent from Britain since 1957. In 1963, two states in northern Borneo, Sabah and Sarawak, joined the states of the Malay Peninsula to create the new country of Malaysia, and henceforth the Peninsular States have been known as West Malaysia, while Sabah and Sarawak are referred to as East Malaysia. Figure 1.1 shows Malaysia together with its neighbouring countries.

The 2015 census puts the total population of Malaysia at 30,699,000 (Department of Statistics, 2015). The major ethnic groups are Malays, other
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